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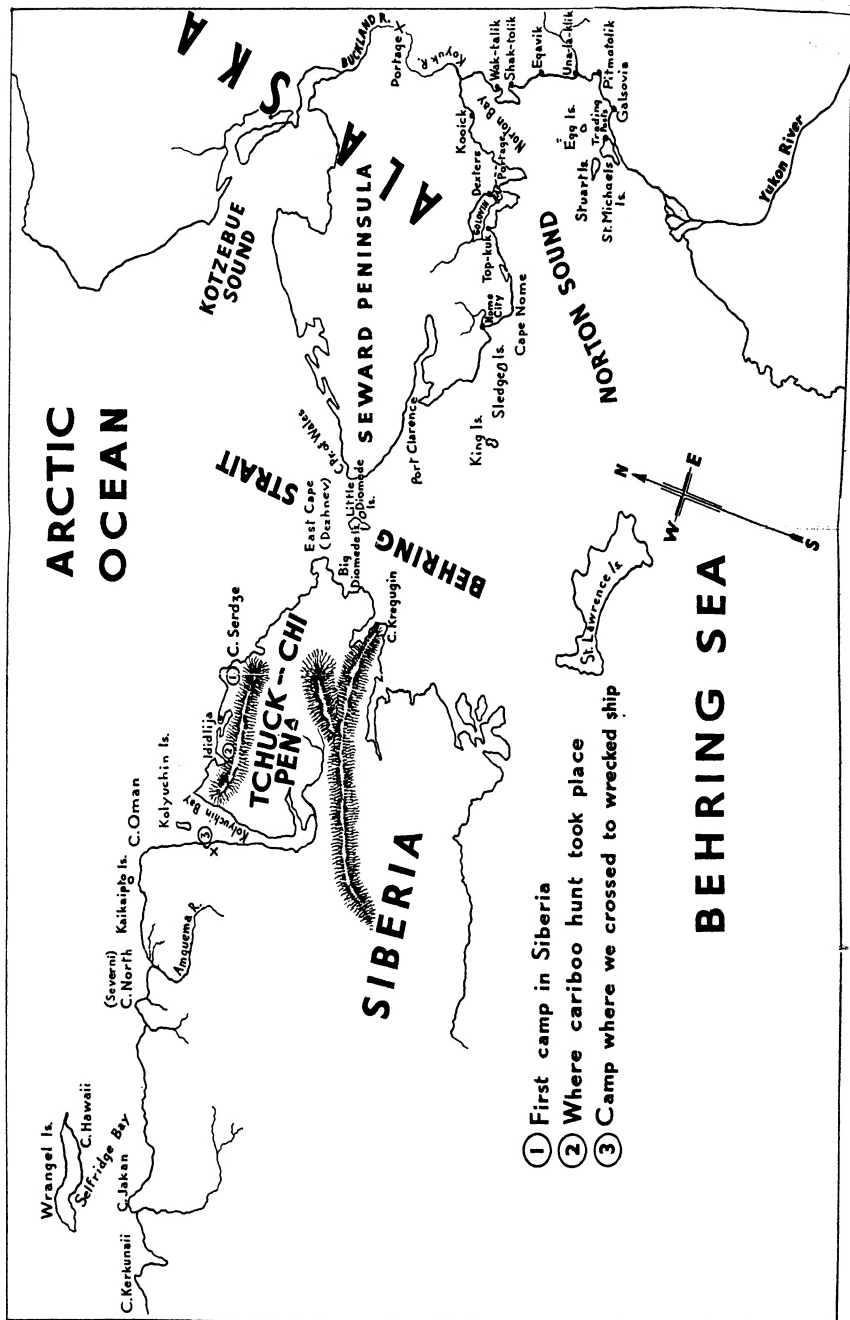
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TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA



TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

By

JOSEPH CRAD

Author of

"I Was There" "I Had Nine Lives"

"All Roads Led to Adventure"

"African Odyssey" etc.

THE TRAVEL BOOK CLUB

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THE CALL OF THE ARCTIC REGIONS

There is something about the Arctic,
Which no printed words can convey;
Is it the call of dog-sleds grants my wish to break away,
From the iron grooves I poke along for gain?
There's a magic,—that is certain:
Lasting magic,—that is sure,
About the Arctic which affects both young and grey.
The finding there of virgin gold,
Can hardly be the lure,
For the call comes back to me both night and day.

JOSEPH CRAD

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
CHAPTER ONE - - - - -	1
A DOG-TEAM RACE IN ARCTIC ALASKA—300 MILES ACROSS ICE FIELDS AND TUNDRA	
CHAPTER TWO - - - - -	18
THE FINISH OF THE RACE—OUTFITS—SLEDs—DOGS— MODES OF TRAVEL—ITS HOWS, WHYS, AND WHERE- FORES	
CHAPTER THREE - - - - -	41
THE DIOMEDE ISLANDS—MANNER OF LIVING—RITES AND CEREMONIES—SUICIDES—WHY AND WHEN—I GO AFTER A GIANT WALRUS—WATCHING THE SEA FREEZE—CURING FURS—HOW DONE AND WHAT USED—HOW TO KEEP YOUR FUR CLOTHES DRY	
CHAPTER FOUR - - - - -	60
FUR TRADING—PRICES PAID—EATING ROTTEN FISH— THE WHY AND WHEN—PECULIAR IGLOOS—HOW MADE AND WHERE MET—THE DANGER OF 'WET RIVERS'— I PICK UP A DESERTED AND DYING MAN—THREE POUNDS OF GOLD DUST—THE TALE	
CHAPTER FIVE - - - - -	78
ESKIMOS OF KOTZEBUE SOUND AND PORT CLARENCE— A GREAT DANCE AND FEAST—THE MIRACLE OF THE OOMIAK DRIVEN OUT TO SEA—ANOTHER KIND OF IGLOO—THE AUTOMATIC HEATER, NATIVE MADE— THE STENCHES, MEALS, MODE OF LIVING, FISHING, ETC. —A LECTURE ON WOMEN—THEIR USES, HOW TO TREAT THEM—EXCHANGING WIVES: THE REASON, WHEN DONE—TALES OF BEAR HUNTS BY AN OLD HUNTER—A VILE UNSAVORY DEN IN WHICH I SPEND A NIGHT—A TALE OF CANNIBALISM—I WATCH A BEAR HUNT A SEAL	

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
CHAPTER SIX - - - - -	95
ANGAG-KUKS (SHAMANS)—THEIR MASKS AND MAGIC— MY DOGS AND A BAD TRIP—HOW WE BURIED A GOOD DOG—A JEWISH PEST—HOW HE FARED—A REGULAR HOODOO—I PREPARE FOR SIBERIA—MY OUTFIT—ITS HOWS, WHYS AND WHEREFORES	
CHAPTER SEVEN - - - - -	108
KLINDENBERG THE LONE WOLF OF THE ARCTIC— CAPTAIN JIM MACKENNA'S TALE OF THE OLGA MUTINY —NONSENSE WRITTEN ABOUT ESKIMOS BY SHORT VISITORS TO GREENLAND—MY FIRST VISITS TO THE TCHUCK-CHIS OF SIBERIA—POLYANDRY—UNBELIEV- ABLE GOLD—STRANGERS FROM THE INTERIOR—I GO ON A GREAT CARIBOU HUNT WITH THEM—THE ORGY WHICH FOLLOWED—AN ESKIMO FREAK—UNIQUE SLEDS—HOW MADE	
CHAPTER EIGHT - - - - -	128
UNIQUE STONE LAMPS AND HEATERS—BUILDING SNOW IGLOOS QUICKLY: HOW IT IS DONE—ASTOUNDING FEATS BY SHAMANS—CAUGHT IN A NORTHER—OUR IGLOO NEARLY BLOWN AWAY—A TERRIFIC FIGHT OVER WOMEN—SIX KILLED—A FEW NECESSARY FACTS ABOUT SIBERIA NOT GENERALLY KNOWN—SOME RE- PULSIVE PEOPLE I MEET NEAR KOLUYCHIN BAY—MORE STRANGE DWELLINGS	
CHAPTER NINE - - - - -	149
THE DESERTED SHIP—A SHAMAN FROM THE YUKON— GOLD, MINERAL WEALTH OF SIBERIA—FURS AND TIMBER—WERE WOLVES AND SPIRITS—INTER- MARRIAGE	
CHAPTER TEN - - - - -	165
CHILDREN AND THEIR TREATMENT—A RUSSIAN DWARF AND FAMILY—A CARIBOU FEAST—A POLAR BEAR HUNT AND DESPERATE FIGHT—AURORA BOREALIS—I FALL SICK—AVALANCHES AND LAND- SLIDES—A SHAMAN'S CURE	

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
CHAPTER ELEVEN - - - - -	180
ESKIMO SEAL HUNT—MA-UK-TOK, AUK-TUK—A YANKEE GIANT HERMIT—HIS FIGHT WITH THE ARCTIC —A VILLAGE UNDER TABOO	
CHAPTER TWELVE - - - - -	201
JOURNEY IN A BLIZZARD—WE FIGHT THROUGH AND SPEND TWO DAYS IN A SNOW DRIFT—DANGERS FROM CREVASSES—CARIBOU AND THEIR MIGRATORY CUS- TOMS—TABOOS—CARIBOU HUNTING—CANNIBALISM— I PULL THROUGH THE ICE—DRASTIC FIRST AID— DOGS IN MOCCASINS—WOMAN'S PART—DISASTER ON HONEYMOON—SPRING IN THE ARCTIC—MOSQUITOS— STRANGE MARRIAGE CUSTOMS	
CHAPTER THIRTEEN - - - - -	225
A WALRUS HUNT—RAW NATURE AT WAR—A NIGHT- MARE RETURN—THE THANKSGIVING DANCES—A WALRUS FIGHT TO THE DEATH	
CHAPTER FOURTEEN - - - - -	243
EFFECT OF ARCTIC LIFE ON CIVILIZED NERVES— FLOOR WHALING—SUMMER IN THE ARCTIC—THE ICE GOES—INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS IN SIBERIA	
CHAPTER FIFTEEN - - - - -	261
THE MOTHER LODE—FAREWELL	

The author wishes to acknowledge his indebtedness to the following authorities whose books have been used for a reference to Eskimo customs, etc.

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A. L. Fleming, Captain Berthof, Captain Phalberg*

CHAPTER ONE

A DOG-TEAM RACE IN ARCTIC ALASKA—300 MILES ACROSS ICE FIELDS AND TUNDRA

THE scene was the trading-store room of the Alaska Commercial Company at St. Michaels, Alaska, the winter of '98-99. Pope, the general manager of the A.C. Co., for that part of Alaska, was having an argument with Old Shepherd of the North American Trading and Transportation Co., as to who was the best musher—dog-team driver—in those parts. Pope had been unholding Jim Dunn, whose wife Dora was half Russian and half Eskimo; just then Captain Walker, 6th, United States Cavalry, and commanding the soldiers at the fort had made this statement:

“Well, Pope, I’m not a rich guy like you bloated post-managers, but I’ve got a few dollars which say that there isn’t a man round these parts that can show the handle-bars of his sled to Polte,” alluding to a half breed who lived with his squaw wife in the Eskimo village a few miles away.

I had been sitting on a barrel of dried apples listening to this, as a matter of fact I was keenly interested as I had recently made a trip for the N.A.T. and T. Co., from St. Michaels and back in record

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

time. So when Old Man Shepherd joined in with his offer I was more than ready to act.

Said the grey-haired, grey-moustached old Texan, with his slow southern drawl:

“Crad here has made one or two good runs for my company, and I’d sure like to back him. I propose that the three men run their teams from here to Dexters and back. Each team to consist of eleven dogs running in traces, two relief dogs to be carried on the sleds if any man wishes. The prize to be three thousand dollars put up by we three.”

This was immediately agreed to by Pope and Captain Walker, who then went into committee to agree on rules and conditions.

First I will describe the course. It was from Fort St. Michaels at the mouth of the Yukon River, across Norton Bay to Dexter’s trading post on Galovin Bay and back and was approximately three hundred miles by the way we should have to go. This would be across the bay to the first Eskimo village of Galsovia—four summer igloos—then to Pitma-talik—three summer igloos on a cliff, then on to the Moravian Mission at Unala-klik, where there were at least twenty summer igloos, then cutting across the ice to Shack-tolik Point and leaving the two igloos at Egavik about five miles on our right. Across Norton Bay to Kooick, on to Kooick-talik and over the dreaded portage, then down the other side and a run up the bay to Dexters.

The terms which the three had agreed on were, that providing that we reported at the Moravian

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Mission to Doctor Karlsen, the head of the mission ; to Anderson, the trading squaw-man at Kooick, and to Joe Dexter at his post on Golavin Bay, and got a signed chit from each, we could run as we liked and take what chances we liked in cutting corners. As a matter of fact each of us knew that we should run exactly the same course and for good reasons.

We were to use basket sleds and each man was to have the right to run any dogs he wished, either his own or borrowed. Then two days before the start, the two managers made a sporting offer. We could go to either store and select whatever we needed for the journey and the winner would be given an order on each store for \$500 worth of goods.

Now a word about the other two men in the race. Dunn had come to the north as a sailor on the old United States Revenue Cutter *Bear*, taken his discharge from her several years previously to this, was then United States Customs Officer for that part of Alaska, and through his pretty 'breed' wife Dora, had acquired one of the finest dog-teams in those parts. He was a splendid musher—dog-team driver—as hard as nails, and had more than once made the run to Una-la-klik and back, a distance of 120 miles, in two days. This of course under ideal ice conditions and with favourable weather.

Polte, as I have written elsewhere, was a half-breed, his father had been a Russian of sorts, his mother an up-river Eskimo from round Andrefski or Holy Cross Mission. He was a splendid man with dogs and could get the very best out of them. I

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

really was indebted to him, for he was the first man to show me how a team on the coast should be handled. Quite differently to much that we did in the interior where the snow is different.

We were to start from a point exactly opposite the Alaska Commercial Co's store, which was on a piece of land jutting out into the bay.

We were scheduled to start at daybreak, that would give us the chance to make Una-la-klik that night if the weather held good. The morning of the start was threatening. Dark clouds were driving across the sky and there was considerable wind. Captain Walker was to fire his service revolver as the signal for the start. All the white women on the island were present to see us get away, Mrs. Emerson, Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Vawter, wife of Marshall Vawter and the last two, both dear friends of mine, all came from the N.A.T. and T. Post. Mrs. Gregory, the wife of the doctor of the Fort had come with them. Then there were Mrs. Dunn and her unmarried sister Olga Fredericks, and a white woman, the wife of a Polish worker for the A.C.Co.

The starting line was between two large barrels placed on the ice one hundred yards apart. This gave us room to line up without the chance of our teams mixing up in a fight. All three teams were pure malamutes, not a husky—I shall explain the difference later on—among the lot.

Four of my eleven dogs were the tawny brindle colour so common amongst malamutes and the other seven were all black and white. Three of

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

them being more than half wolf. Mothered by malamutes and crossed with wolves by tying them up in the forests around the head of Norton Bay.

All our sleds were light basket sleds. Mine was the largest being a ten footer, this was the sled I used for my mail carrying work and was shod with walrus ivory runners. Better than steel, which has a tendency to cling to the ice in very cold weather—I mean about fifty to sixty below. Our harness was the lightest racing harness and of course we all used eye and toggle; we were not cheechacos to attempt to use metal snaps.

I can picture that scene to-day. We three men standing there with rigid faces, with light fawn-skin caribou parkas, fur mukluks and hanging on to the handle-bars of our sleds, holding back our snapping excited teams while a man stood holding the collar of each of our leaders. The teams were harnessed coast fashion, that is in pairs, with a leader on a single line well ahead of the team. He was the brains of the team and winning or losing would depend largely on him.

Polte was the favourite in the betting, Dunn and myself being about even. I had this in my favour, I had recently made the run and knew the condition of the ice and where the worse ridges and pressures were to be met. An important thing, as the terrific ice pressure is always altering conditions in Norton Sound and the Behring Sea.

I began to get fidgety as the start was delayed. Not only were my nerves on edge, but the wind was

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

rising fast and I could tell that we were in for a bad time the first day at least. Then I heard Captain Walker's penetrating voice shout: "Are you ready?" In less than ten seconds he fired his revolver and with one voice we all yelled "Mush" to our teams.

My beauties made a splendid start. The man at the collar of my great leader, Prince, had practised the start with me. He had kept his eyes on Walker, and as the soldier raised his revolver behind our backs, had given me a signal with his unoccupied hand. The going at the start was good. There was smooth ice across to the mainland almost opposite to Galsovia. Here we rounded a point and then the wind got us. It was terrible. It hit the parts of my face not covered by my parka hood driving the breath down my throat, and beating the exposed parts of my face with millions of particles of fine frozen snow which cut like particles of fine steel.

Rounding the bluff and getting into the slight bay which had Pitma-talik at the far side, the wind seemed to get worse as it swept down from the hills on my right. By now Polte had pushed well ahead. The wind got so bad that it was impossible for me to face it and I had to run with my head bent well over the handle-bars and trust to my grand leader, Prince.

What wonderful fellows those leaders were. Surely there must be a doggy heaven for them.

They say, "heart of a lion" when alluding to great pluck. Well I'd known lions. I say heart of a dog. There is no animal living that has more guts,

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

is more faithful, has more brains and on whom a man can depend like a dog.

Mile after mile I made along that awful coast. The wind was now sweeping in right from out across the Sound. Far in the distance I could hear a noise, like a great barrage of guns on the Western Front when one was many miles at the rear. This was the great ice-field breaking up and the sea pounding the floes one against the other. Now Polte, who was weather wise to the coast, had sent me a message that night by an old squaw, Teech-chuck—she of the one eye—telling me to start with moccasins on my dogs. That I should surely need them before the next night arrived. Damned decent of him.

I had taken his advice. I was now very glad I had done as Polte had suggested. Even as it was I dreaded that the dogs paws might be frozen. A howling norther was blowing by now and the cold was terrific. The cold was always felt more when the glass was only five below with a gale blowing than it was at sixty below and no wind. I had seen a lot of travel before this, but I freely admit that I began to get slightly scared.

About twenty miles from Una-la-klik I ran into a patch of new ice-ridges. These had been caused by the recent bad weather; I dared not risk trying to cross these ridges, it might have meant the breaking of some of my sled struts. I shouted to Prince and made him turn towards the shore. As I reached the tundra, the blizzard swept down from

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

the hills, seized me as in a vice-grip and nearly wrenched me from the handle-bars of the sled. Then it started to turn the sled over on its side. I knew that if this should happen there was every chance of my never reaching the Mission. Dropping my hold on the handle-bars, I fought my way to Prince and headed him right into the face of the storm. I broke trail for him and the old chap followed. Then I got in the shelter of a steep bluff. I knew that on the far side of this there was a single Eskimo igloo and decided to fight my way there and stop there for the night.

When I made the igloo I was more dead than alive. The next morning the wind had gone down considerably, though it was still blowing a moderate gale. The next night after a gruelling day along the tundra, and bad going over broken ice—for several miles there was nothing but cakes upended by the terrific ice pressure—I reached the Moravian Mission with a badly frozen face. This, however, was soon thawed out with slush water, water in which plenty of snow has been put, this is rubbed on the frozen part until it thaws, then dry snow is rubbed in until the circulation is normal again.

I learnt at Doctor Karlson's house that Polte had stopped at the mission the previous night and that two of his dogs had been in bad shape. Dunn was also ahead of me but not many miles. He had made the mission late in the afternoon then pushed on to Egavik. I meant to miss this by climbing a steep hill and then cutting right across to Shack-tolik.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

I only slept five hours at Una-la-klik and then pushed on to the hill where I was to make the portage. This was a dangerous place, and when crossing it with freight on my sled on a previous run, I had been forced to lower a large part of my load by rope. I reached the top, and started across. Suddenly the wind came howling from across Norton Sound. In a second it had us in its power and was taking sled and team towards where there was a steep bluff. Going over this would have meant certain death for myself and team.

Here is where the value of an intelligent and courageous leader came in.

I swung the sled into the face of the storm. This had the effect of breaking the sled. Prince gave one look round to see what the trouble was, grasped what I wanted, and instantly swung the team in the same direction. Then exerting all of his great strength—he weighed one hundred and twenty-five pounds and was all muscle and bone—he simply galvanized the team into tenfold action. We bucked that damnable wind as if it had been gentle zephyrs. We fought it yard by yard, and at last were able to get down the far side in safety.

I then cut across the field-ice—bad going it was too—and reached the log igloos at Shack-tolik about seven that night. I had done seventy miles in two days and bucked all the way one of the worst northers I have ever travelled in.

Both my team and myself were in a bad way. My face had again frozen down one side—the same side

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

as before—and the big toe on my right foot hurt me from stepping on a sharp point of ice. The first thing I did was to see to each of my dogs. I went over each old fellow carefully. Massaged their legs and rubbed walrus blubber between their toes. Then I cooked them a good meal of dried salmon and rolled oats with some small pieces of blubber in the stew. The beauties tucked it away in great shape. Two other teams arrived that night. These were mushers down from the Koyu-ku-kuk River who had made the portage across to Norton Bay and were making for Nome City. One of these men, a cheechaco—greenhorn—was in terrible shape.

Late that night an Eskimo got in from Kooick, across the bay. He reported that the gale had broken the ice up badly and that it would be much too dangerous to attempt crossing from Shacktolik point. I then decided that I would make for farther up the bay and cross from a place called Woktolik, where there were three Eskimo igloos.

I started out the next morning about four o'clock. The wind was still pretty bad but there was a glorious moon and this made the going almost as light as day. By twelve o'clock I had made Woktolik and then headed up the bay to where the timber started. Directly I entered this we were protected from the wind. Then my furs became oppressive. I began to sweat with heat and was glad to remove my light, fur parka and put on one of drill. I soon ran across the trail of either Polte or Dunn and could tell that I was not far behind them.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

The going in the timber was bad. The snow was very deep, damp and clung to my snow-shoes, even though I was using the five foot narrow show of the coast. I broke trail a few yards ahead of Prince and the team plugged gamely along behind me. At last I reached the point where it was safe for me to start across the bay—not more than twenty miles wide here—and then we got a taste of bad ice. It was simply infernal. Just as if it had been ploughed up by a barrage of heavy shell fire and the ice pieces frozen as they hit the sea again. I did not make more than a mile an hour for half the day, then, I had some luck, proving how freaky nature is.

I hit ice that was simply ideal. Flat and smooth as a billiard table. With just the right amount of snow on it, about a third of an inch. Enough to give the doggies gripping power with their paws, but so thin that it allowed the sled runners to cut right through to the ice. We hit up a great pace on this. I got on the sled every once in a while and then it looked like one of the crazy movie pictures. Dogs galloping, tails up, and the hero riding at his ease on the sled. Seen in real life once in a long, long winter.

We had this kind of going right to Kooick. That night each doggie had a banquet which I had put up for him at St. Michaels. This was a mixture I used frequently when making fast trips, and where I was going to use up every ounce of energy my dogs possessed. It consisted of chopped, raw, seal-meat—the choicest parts only; to this was added a

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

plentiful amount of dried (dessicated) eggs ; chopped fat bacon, a large amount of good Russian tallow and the whole stirred up with a glass of rum. Two pounds went to each dog. After eating it their tummies glowed and they tucked down to sleep, and to forget the troubles of a racing dog's life.

Ahead of me now lay one of the worst places in the whole run. This was the steep and dangerous portage at Kooick-talik. Dunn had camped that night at Kooick, but Polte had again taken chances which we had funked. He had arrived at Kooick six hours ahead of me, then instead of stopping he had gone right on and camped about twelve miles away in the first of the small timber. I left Kooick about three in the morning, cut out from the point right on to the ice-field and made for where the portage started. I was taking a big risk, but an old Eskimo had told me that he was certain that the ice would be good and that there was not any chance of the field breaking up. As I got close to Kooick-talik I could see Polte and his team right up the portage and very close to the summit of the divide. Then as I reached the shore I saw Dunn about two miles away, behind me, and hugging the shore line.

My leader, Prince, had spotted Polte and his team, he soon let the remainder of my dogs know the news and they went at it like good fellows, making the snow fly as they almost hugged the ground with their bellies and threw themselves into the collars of their harness.

Now this portage was bad. Really bad. The

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

timber went up to within a mile of the top; which was bare rock in the summer and in the winter, usually rock with a coating of glare ice over it. Snow would never stay there, and there was always a wind blowing from the direction of Galovin Bay. Many a man had been blown clear off the summit with his loaded sled and team and dashed to pieces on the trees below.

The glass was now twenty-three below and yet a strong wind was blowing. This was most unusual with such cold. I started up for the summit and was dreading what I knew I should have to face. The cold grew deadly. My hands were in great mitts hanging from my shoulder by strings, in these mitts I held small bundles of hay clutched in my hands at intervals to keep them warm. Yet no sooner did I put one hand on the handle-bars of my sled than the mitt would freeze to it.

My team had now dropped down to a pace less than a mile an hour. Dunn was close behind me and then I hit the open space of the summit. The wind smacked me first on one side and then on the other. Then it brought up a smother of snow from the timber line below. On and on we ploughed through that smother of wind and fine snow. Gosh! What wonderful hearts dogs have. I've driven mules, oxen, camels, and reindeer—horses of course—but I give first place to a dog-team for sheer guts and the willingness to die in the harness, pulling to the last ounce and last second.

How we got over the summit I was never quite

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

sure. It was a nightmare. Twice the wind drove us to the perilous part where there was a sheer drop of more than a hundred feet on to the tree tops below. Then we got over the divide. Here I wrapped four chains round my sled runners and gave the dogs their heads. I hung on to the handle-bars, with a foot on each runner and where it had taken us several hours to reach the summit, in less than half an hour we had flown down, through the timber and were on the ice on Galovin Bay.

Before running up the bay, I gave the team half an hours rest and talked to them, rubbing each old fellow behind his ears and making much of them. It cheered them up and though the average malamute is the reverse of demonstrative, he is like any human being, he likes to know that his efforts are appreciated by the two-legged beast who drives him.

Then we started off again. Now their tails were well up over their backs, their ears pricked up and their heads tilted the very least bit on one side to catch what their two-legged pal was saying to them. They knew by the way he spoke to each one in turn, that he was feeling more than pleased with them. Tails up and ears pricked forward was a good sign, I knew that they were still in fine fettle.

I decided to make a really late run that night, and get to Dexter's at all cost. The wind died down, the trail was good—there was always a well beaten trail to Joe Dexter's store—and as night came on, first there was a velvety black sky, sprinkled with a million, million stars of all sizes, and then a grand

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

aurora came out. This is usually the case after a heavy wind like we had had. The myriads of stars gradually paled from the light of the aurora borealis, and the Arctic stillness was broken only by the singing of my sled runners and the swish, swish of the aurora overhead.

Somewhere near midnight I hit Dexter's trading store and Joe and his squaw wife and some of her relatives got me a meal while I attended to each of my beauties.

I have seen considerable service with the cavalry, and there a man is trained to think of and look to his horse before he thinks of himself. So it is with a good musher. See to your dogs first. They are always a man's first consideration on the trail.

Polte had got to Dexter's four hours ahead of me and had given orders that he was to be called at midnight. He was going to take advantage of the weather and the glorious night to make some extra time.

Well, I was glad of one thing. I was so close on Polte's heels that I was forcing him to go all out. That was some feather in my cap. But I was completely exhausted that night. Somehow the months I had spent on the trail with teams, made it second nature for me to see to each of my pals first. That night I would be rubbing their paws and suddenly drop asleep, only to wake with a start as I fell forward. I massaged all their legs as carefully as any cup-tie-final player has his massaged before the great day. I went over each paw and examined it.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Then saw that every moccasin was soft and pliable and that not one had a hole in it. Two were badly cut, these Joe Dexter's squaw took charge of and had them properly mended. I saw each old fellow tucked away in a good bed of hay and then turned in for *Two Hours*. Two hours! I could have slept soundly without waking for a week only to turn over on the other side and sleep for another week.

I craved for sleep and rest. I craved for a good meal. Dozens of cups of real coffee, to wash down dozens of eggs, beautifully fried and resting on great thick slices of luscious, juicy ham. I wanted to chuck the thing up. I dreaded the morrow. The stinging, biting frost. The dread and hate of it was with me even in my sleep. Before I dropped off, my brain kept painting pictures of the morrow. Of my one hundred and fifty odd miles return journey.

The up and down, up and down, up and down of my pumping feet, perhaps half the time with snowshoes on them. I thought of the soft clinging snow, of how mechanically my feet, heavy as lead, would hate to allow my legs to lift them. I pictured the contraction of the calf of each leg as it lifted my foot, the jar to the foot as I put it down. Thought of the wind cutting through my parka and sucking at my flesh if it could find the smallest crevice through which to penetrate.

"Come on Crad. Here wake up. It is time you were on the move. Wife's got a good breakfast for you."

It was Joe Dexter shaking me by both my

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

shoulders and even then he could hardly arouse me.

I had done half my journey and now must start back on the most gruelling half. Must make better time and do with less sleep than Polte if I was to beat him.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FINISH OF THE RACE—OUTFITS—SLEDS—DOGS—
MODES OF TRAVEL—ITS HOWS, WHYS, AND WHERE-
FORES

I ATE a meal which would have astonished the heftiest navvy or stevedore. Then before starting to harness my team I went over each piece of their gear with minute care. I examined the traces to see if they were chafing in any place. Felt and examined each dog's collar to see that it was soft and that it fitted snugly. Once again I went over each dog to see that his legs were fit, that he did not limp, that there was plenty of fat between his toes, that his moccasins fitted snugly and yet were not too tight and then when they were harnessed I went and spoke to each one individually. Patted each shaggy head and the dears flopped their huge bushy tails and told me in doggy lingo:

"Gosh! You don't want to get all fussed up, Boss. We are the boys who will see you through. We are not the chaps to let you down. Put your last dollar on us. Let's go!"

Off we went. Well I had driven that team a good many hundred miles. They knew me and I knew them. Just before I yelled to them: "Mush you

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

devils! Kee, kee, ominuk hooten!" Prince looked back at me and I'll bet my last dollar that he gave me a knowing wink.

Once more we made that awful portage, but this time with the wind at our backs. I got down to the other side and on to the ice, feeling much more cheerful than when I had crossed it two days previously. Practically one hundred and twenty-five miles to Fort St. Michaels. Well the worst part was over, but now the muscles of my legs were tiring fast. For more than one hundred and sixty miles I had been up and down hills, over rocks, across hummocky ice and my steps had seldom varied an inch. Now my eyes would hardly keep open. It was as if they were weighted with lumps of lead on each eyelid.

There were gnawing, tormenting pains in my calves and thighs. Twice when I gave the dogs their small frozen tom-cod—a fish the size of a whiting—at noon, I had fallen asleep. Then once more my feet would start pumping up and down, up and down behind the sled. I would be tempted to ride. Then take a brace on myself, knowing that it would mean losing the race and not playing the game with my plucky team.

The weather got better. Then round midday the sweat poured off me. I chewed on pieces of fat bacon to get the nourishment in me my body needed so badly and craved for.

Kooick at last. The Eskimos came out and helped me with my team. These attended to I

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

crawled down the tunnel and up through the floor of an igloo, my sleeping bag had been taken in by a squaw, another had prepared a meal from my tuck-box. I ate this sleeping as I did so, then fell fast asleep. To be awakened in what seemed five seconds by an Eskimo shaking me.

Now I started out across Norton Bay from Kooick to Shack-tolik Point, forty-five miles across the ice-field and dangerous if a wind springs up. Once I had been caught like that. The ice had broken up, and I had been four days on an ice floe and forced to eat four of my dogs. This time the going was good most of the way and I made Shack-tolik Point only four miles behind Polte. Dunn was a good ten miles behind me. I had seen him at midday, a tiny speck of black on the white, glare ice.

Shack-tolik igloos at last and roughly seventy miles to go. I got to the first igloo like a dead man. How I unharnessed and saw to my dogs I have slight recollection. At the igloo I rested for only two hours, then harnessing up again I started on for Egavik. The Eskimos warned me that the ice ridges had become so bad that it was impossible to cut across to Una-la-klik.

There was once more a slight wind, nothing bad, but the glass was very low and the wind cut through the front of my parka hood. The muscles of my neck seemed to hurt me and keep contracting.

It was utterly dark as I left Shak-tolik and there was not a star to be seen. My head seemed to fall between my shoulders and jerked up and down at

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

each step I took. For forty-eight hours, except for less than six hours rest, my feet had pumped up and down like two engines. Gosh Almighty! how I longed for the sight of the Alaska Commercial Company's store on the point of St. Michaels.

Then I reached Egavik. A few hours rest here and then on to Una-la-klik. Here I was almost on top of Polte. I rested my wonderful team for two hours. Gave them the last of their special meals, this time three pounds to each dog. Then on to a small igloo half-way between the Mission and Pitma-talik. Polte had increased his lead by at least half an hour. Dunn was about two miles behind me.

Now my dogs were showing signs of weariness, they were plodding on with tails down and heads drooping. Heads bent so low that their breath was freezing on their forelegs and caking on their collars. That awful journey was telling on even their wolfish stamina, and the eternal grind of those two hundred odd miles pulling the whole time in harness, mile after mile, hour after hour, day after day, was wearing down even their gallant hearts.

It was telling on me equally badly. I was a trained man on the trail. Hard as nails, used to the life—and loved it for all its terrors and hardships. It *was* a man's life and all it asked was that you should stand up to it man fashion. Time after time now, I was falling asleep holding on to the handlebars of the sled. Then I would come to with a jerk. My mind would function once more. With bitter

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

remorse I would think what a rotter I was to do what my gallant dogs could not do. Then I would feel my heart go out in a flood of tender feeling for those gallant four-footed pals, who were giving me the last ounce of their strength and the last atom of their guts and pluck. I would brace myself by thinking of their poor tired feet and legs. Of their paws as they tapped, tapped on the hard ice or frozen snow. Their splendid wolfish strain was fighting off the weariness that their bodies felt.

Now, sitting at a typewriter, thousands and thousands of miles from where their gallant bodies are buried, I think wistfully of them and *those days*. *Wish that I could live that life again and never, never return to the drudgery and worries of civilization.*

What courage and faithfulness those dogs possessed!

I was fast playing out. The limits of my strength had come. I was on the point of exhaustion. I would get dizzy. For minutes on end I would plug along in a maze. Each foot seemed to be weighted down with ten pounds of lead tied to it.

Then I got to Galsovia. Less than forty miles to the Fort. Polte was now less than half a mile ahead of me. I began to get light-headed. Twice I found myself laughing and singing like a drunken fool. Then I began to talk to each dog, for I noticed that my singing had made them prick up. I would call each dog by name and talk to him for a few minutes, continually using his name so that he knew that it was he to whom I was talking. This did them a lot

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

of good. Their ears pricked up, and some of them carried their brushes up over their backs again.

Pitma-talik. Twenty miles across from there were the trading posts and the Fort.

Now I was less than a hundred yards behind Polte.

We started out across the sea to the island.

"Mush, you beafts. Kee, kee, mush. O minuk hooten. Kee, kee o min-uk-kuk."

I yell and shout to the team. Prince looks round as if to say, "gone quite crazy, boss?"

The splendid devils are doing well. Then comes more trouble. Just when we are exhausted and in the very worst shape to stand it. Without any warning a norther starts. It came shrieking from the direction of the mouth of the great Yukon River. The dogs now had little reserve strength to call on. It was only their gallant hearts that kept them going.

On we went. Then the storm died down again.

Noon came. I dared not stop to give them a rest, we should never have started again.

At last I could make out the great main warehouse of the A.C.Co. Then slowly I made out their stores on the point.

Polte was now about three sled lengths ahead. Dunn quite a mile behind me. Polte and I were not doing much more than a slow walk. It was the pace of dog-weary men. We were two staggering, exhausted, bleary-eyed men, driving teams who were hardly able to lift their feet. Dogs and men

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

were at the very limit of endurance. My face was badly frozen. One side seemed like a solid piece of rock or ice. I was travelling on sheer will-power alone.

In front of me were the backs of my dogs, their shaggy coats seeming to bob up and down before my eyes.

This was a race such as is never heard of in civilized communities. It was a race, yes! but also a test of physical endurance for man and dogs.

Slowly twilight began to fall. Now I could clearly see the Eskimo igloos on the small bluff just before one came to the A.C.Co.'s buildings.

The dogs were slowing up. Even Prince was all in. Then I received a heart wrench. I loved my team. Every single dog in it I looked on as a pal. Night after night, for weeks and months on end, they were the only companions I had to talk to round my camp fire.

I saw blood on the ice and snow. Blood from their cut and bleeding paws.

It increased. I knew that some of it must be coming from Polte's team. Prince was now almost touching Polte himself as he ran behind his sled.

I tried to yell to the team. Could only get out a wheezing gasp. My whole body was like a solid mass of lead.

My heart was beating like a sledge-hammer.

I was stumbling, lurching, sobbing, gasping for breath as my tortured and overworked lungs tried to pump in air.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

B . . . O . . . O . . . M. It was the old brass cannon of the A.C.Co. which had been fired. Pistol shots rang out. Shouts and cheers. They were saluting the winner of the race. This was Polte, certainly one of the best mushers Western Alaska ever knew. Polte had been one of the men who was with Lord Lonsdale when he was in Alaska in the late eighties.

* * * *

Well I started my book with the description of that race because it will show how very dependent we are on dogs in the Arctic, even to-day.

Planes can and do drop men and provisions at points far in the interior or in the Bad Lands, doing this in a few hours when it would take weeks by dog-team, but if that miner, prospector or mining-engineer wishes to travel from that base of his, then he must use dogs.

* * * *

I had been in Alaska some years before this race. Had been in the early Klondyke rush, gone over the 'Pass' and down the trail to Dawson. Out again and then in to St. Michaels or the North American Trading and Transportation Company. I had been one of the first on the Nome goldfields, where amongst other freak finds in that freakish field, gold had been found in millions of dollars in the sea sand.

There is no truer axiom than that used by all 'old time' miners and prospectors, it says: "Gold

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

is where you find it and not where the text books say it should be."

For two winters I had carried the mails by dog-team for the United States Government, and this meant travelling light. That is, if one meant to make any money out of the game. No tent and no luxuries. Yet in the end it was not only the simplest way but the safest and most comfortable way.

To understand my trip into Arctic Siberia, how it was done at so little cost and some of the incidents of the journey, it will be best for me to show how I outfitted for any trip, what I took with me and the kind of clothes and grub which I carried.

First I will talk of dogs. Books of fiction, and the 'pictures', do not bother themselves about such details as whether they are using the correct dogs for that particular country. Their dogs are huskies or malamutes, as the mood takes them. Now these dogs are quick distinct breeds. Each is used in a different kind of country and usually for different purposes. The husky is the heavy cart-horse type, the malamute the racing or saddle-horse type. The husky is descended from a crossing of the English mastiff with wolves a hundred years ago in the Hudson Bay country and the Mackenzie Delta; the malamute is descended from a crossing of Scotch collie and the coast wolf, a smaller wolf than the great timber wolf of the interior.

No musher who knew his work, and understood dogs, would think of using huskies on the coast. This brings one to the different kinds of sleds used

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

and the different ways of harnessing. On the coast there is nothing ever used except the ten foot basket sled. This is usually two feet wide and made of hickory or a similar wood. A good basket sled will never have a nut, bolt or screw in it. Every join will be held by lashings made of the finest and thinnest seal thongs. Then it will give at any part, and never break the struts when crossing hummocky ice or bad tundra.

Dogs on the coast are always harnessed in pairs and with the leader well ahead of the team. The leader is not a working member of the team. He is the brains—and the undisputed boss. When night comes—and often before—he will attend to the dog who has been slacking, for many a cunning dog, and you quickly weed him out from your team, will pull just enough to keep his body snugly against his harness, but actually he is not pulling an ounce. I have never found an outside dog much good on the trail. He has not the instinct needed. For instance when night comes, your husky or malamute, as soon as he has had his evening meal, will hunt for a nice pile of soft snow, dig himself a pit in it, twist round a few times, curl up with his great tail over his nose and sleep snugly till morning.

That brings up the matter of feeding dogs, how, what and when.

On the trail—racing days excluded—the dog should have one good meal daily and that only at night. Dried salmon is the best and two or three pounds of this. Once a week I used to give my dogs

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

a large piece of blubber, that clears their insides out and keeps them fit. Twice a week I would give them a hot stew of salmon, rolled oats and some meat odds and ends thrown in. All this of course applies only to the trail. Then at midday, I would give each dog one tom-cod, frozen and raw. This was the equivalent to giving a human being a strong cocktail. The cold frozen fish would go into his tummy and soon he would be ready and eager to be on the go again. Give him a large meal and he would want to doze and sleep.

Next come the different kinds of snow-shoes used, why and when.

In the interior and where the snow is dry and fine as cerebos salt, and will not pack, the Canadian wide, oval snow-shoe or snow-pack is best. This kind of snow is always met in the interior, and never on the coast where the damp salt air makes it slightly moist—and salt. Then the long, coast shoe is used, this is made of very light wood, is four to five feet long and nine inches wide with a turned up front. I mentioned the snow being salty. It is extremely bad, even dangerous for a man whilst travelling to pick up handfuls of snow and eat it to quench his thirst. Soon he will be doing it continuously, with the result that he will have the most agonizing cramps in his stomach.

Then comes foot-gear. Muk-luks or footwear made from seal skin are used on the coast. These are of two kinds, waterproof for wet weather and wet snow, and fur for cold weather.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Both have thick soles made from sealskin treated with oil and without any hair on it. The waterproof boot has oiled skin tops reaching to the knee. The fur muk-luks having fur tops reaching to the knee or thighs and these are made from the legs of cariboo. Inside these muk-luks, the 'old timer' and the Eskimo, will put a padding of two inches of hay made from long, thin and wiry grass. This will keep the feet as warm as toast, but must never be used a second time. The hay will have absorbed moisture and this will cause the feet to freeze quickly. The same applies to the mitts. A small amount of hay carried in them clenched in the hand will keep the hands warm.

Clothing. In the coldest weather I would use a parka of light fawn skins, with long wolf hair round the hood. This long hair will prevent the face from freezing except in bad blizzards. From February on to the end of May, all a man needs when travelling on the ice or the trail, is a parka made of stout mattress ticking with a good fur round the hood.

What about a tent? Well I never carried one on the trail except for the first two days on my first trip. That was more than enough. On the coast when I could not make an igloo, I bedded out. If there was timber, this would be the procedure.

Unharness my dogs. Then go and make a good fire. Put the coffee billy on, and back to feed the dogs. The coffee would now be boiling and taking my frying pan, I would throw in it some slices of bacon,

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

a few handfuls of beans and in ten minutes I had a meal.

Beans cooked in ten minutes?

Yes! in less!

Before I started out I boiled all my beans, ran the juice off and put them out on boards to freeze singly. Then dumped them all in my sack. I then took my bacon and cut it in thick slices—an axe will not dent it on the trail when it is fifty below zero—these thrown into the large frying pan with the beans on top will give a splendid meal in less than ten minutes. Then thick hot flapjacks can be made in the same pan and washed down with more hot coffee.

On one side of the fire I would put up a 'fire-brak', this would throw the fire on me. At my back would be a canvas windshield. A bed would be made of small cedar boughs, over this I would spread a thick Hudson Bay blanket and then roll up in my squirrel robe. And sleep like a top.

No timber?

Well then I would use my sleeping-bag, either in a snowdrift, or alongside my sled, so that the wind would blow the snow over me, and in that bag with me would be Prince. My fur parka and his shaggy fur coat would keep us warm. Sometimes if I moved too much to suit his lordship, he would give a wolfish snarl as much as to say:

"Look here you two-legged nuisance. I'll stand just so much of my sleep being disturbed, then you'll be for it."

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

On the trail I never carried tinned food of any description, not even milk, but usually a large amount of sugar. This did not only for my tea or coffee but also for using on my flapjacks.

Two winters before the race I have described, I was sent by the N.A.T. and T. Co., up to the headwaters of the Buckland River, this was at the head of Norton Bay and practically in the Kotzebue country. Whilst felling a tree, I got badly hurt by one of the boughs which knocked me down and cut my head open badly. In fact for some hours I must have been unconscious. I knew that the nearest doctor was old Gregory, the military doctor at the Fort, so started out to try and get there or to the Mission at Una-la-klik.

Down the Buckland River I started with old Prince in the lead. He was my great hope. If ever a dog had reasoning powers it was Prince. Down the frozen river I went, swaying and stumbling at the handle-bars of my sled. Every so often I would get in the sled and ride until forced out by the cold. For miles I would run with my drooping head almost touching my knees; my mitted hands gripping the handle-bars of the sled. I must have looked a nice sight with blood matted in my hair and beard.

The danger was the ice. It was late in the spring and the ice was getting rotten. The team kept drawing closer and closer to where the ice was rotten and treacherous. Every once in a while their heads stretched further out; then the sprays of

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

slush and soggy, mushy ice sprang higher from the sled runners.

"Haw, Prince, Haw!" I would yell to him.

Prince would instantly obey, drawing nearer to the river bank.

Once I lost my head and gave him the wrong command.

"Gee! Prince, gee!" I called to him.

He wavered. To turn in the direction I had said was to approach open water, where the honey-combed and rotten ice was broken by the spring thaw and tossed and twisted in great chaffing and pounding slabs forced along by the swirling current. The dog glanced over his shoulder at the water then at me and whinnied softly, then, disobediently and deliberately kept on his course straight for the nearest bank, this was a promontory jutting out into the river about half a mile ahead.

I was light headed. Out of my mind a bit.

"Damn you, Prince! Gee! Gee!" I yelled in my crazy fury.

The wheelers swerved to the right, but Prince, wise old leader, twisted about, snarled fiercely—was he not the acknowledged boss of all the team—threatened them, cowered them into obeying and following him, and went straight on.

A loud crackling roar echoed along the river for miles; the ice directly ahead splintered and yawned. Waters of the river gurgled up. With a sharp turn to the left, Prince flanked the great fissure, then swung once more towards the promontory.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Another roar followed, a crash, a tremendous rending and grinding of ice, and a swirl of icy water swept past the racing dogs and the sled, softening into clinging, impeding slush, the deep drifts of driven snow that lay close to the promontory, and as Prince, with a joyous yelp, leaped to the shelving bank, the ice beneath us reared in great glistening sheets, shattered into a thousand fragments, and the waters whirled and swept about me and the sled and the wheel dogs.

Prince literally yanked the team, sled and myself up and on to that bank. He and he alone got the team and myself to the camp of some Innuït Indians who nursed me back to the time when I was fit enough to travel again.

I was once offered big money for Prince in his presence. He was laying at my feet. The man making the offer was a trader, and a good friend of mine. That dog knew. He rose up on his four feet, his hackles standing straight up and without making a sound he bared his terrible fangs. Anderson, the trader, said to him: "All right, Prince. Take it easy. I take it all back."

Slowly Prince sank down again. Looked up at Anderson and went to sleep. Twice he saved my life from the attacks of men made when I was unprepared. He was some dog as the Yankees would say.

There is one thing I always hate to remember about Prince. Something which is always on my conscience, and that was the way he was caught and

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

the way in which I was forced to break him in to harness. He had run wild until full grown; used to come to the Eskimo village across the other side of the island and rob their catches at night.

I paid the Eskimos seventy-five dollars to catch him. Then we put harness on him, with wire under the webbing and staked him out. It took ten days of club and starvation before I could get him to let me feed him out of my hand. Another ten weeks before he would be harnessed to a sled by himself.

Once this was done I used nothing but kindness. I spent hours and hours every day I could spare, in training him—and he was worth it. But often afterwards when he would look at me with those wonderful eyes of his, I would think he was remembering the time when I had used a club to him.

You see it is so different for a dog who has been trained as a puppy to harness. Immediately he can toddle he has a little harness fitted to him, and for an hour or two each day is tied up to something in the cabin. So he grows up—with what his puppy mind looks on as some infernal contraption on him and which is one of the things in life to be borne. Then when about six months old he will be taken out for the first time with his mother and harnessed along side her. If he starts any nonsense then, Ma will soon give him a nip which will make him ki-yi and behave himself. His next experience will be doubled up with another dog and pulling a sled

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

doing light chores. Then if he shows more than the average intelligence, and belongs to a good 'musher', he will be picked out for training as a leader.

A really good leader in those days, such a dog as Prince, would fetch from \$1,500 to \$5,000 and be worth every dollar of it.

Dogs! Dogs! Dogs! A man could write a dozen books about them, that is a man who loved them and had travelled a few thousand miles with them. Not a cheechaco, who thought they were just dogs. No sir! Dogs have their individualities just as men have.

It was our knowledge of the little tricks of Arctic travel which made it possible for 'mushers' like myself and hundreds of others, to travel and get to places with small outfits and on extremely limited means.

There were many men like Klindenberg, the Lone Wolf of the Arctic. Sapala, Scotty Allen and dozens of others who with incredibly small outfits got to places afterwards heralded by well-known and well-advertised explorers, as being "first found and visited first by them."

Little tricks! Take dogs for instance. Whoever heard of any old timer—or Eskimo—trying to travel or reach out of the way and unknown places with reindeer, ponies or motor cars, like some explorers have done.

Think it out this way! A reindeer must have his moss and travel in country where he can obtain it. Again, mules may be stubborn, but they have

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

nothing on a reindeer when he feels that he does not want to travel another yard. Ponies! Well you must carry his fodder with you, it is easy to reckon how far you can get with him on the ice or the tundra country. Motor cars! Well the same applies as to ponies. Dogs! God bless them! You can eat everything they eat. The dried salmon or rolled oats you carry for them is just as good for you. Then, when it comes to the last lap. When you have eaten the last piece of bacon and found the last bean in your bag; you can kill a dog, eat the best of him and give the remainder to the other dogs. And this right down to the last dog. I have done it myself and Joe Dexter, who I mentioned in the first chapter is an instance of what this means. He was crossing the mouth of Norton Bay when a blizzard came up. He and his two Eskimos, with their team of eleven dogs were driven out to sea. They had few provisions with them as they had only expected to be two days on their journey to Una-la-klik. Then they were driven out into the Behring Sea. Dexter was fifteen days on that floe. They ate all their dogs, and the two Eskimos died from exposure. At last Joe Dexter was driven ashore on his floe. He was almost dead, and was ever afterwards partially paralysed. But had it not been for his dogs he would have died.

Little tricks! Such as the sled having seal lashings instead of metal bolts or screws. Metal will certainly mean the wood breaking at that point under severe cold. Then warmth! Well, sleeping out on the ice

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

is hard, darned hard. But with a good sleeping bag, waterproof canvas outside and winter caribou hide inside, with the fur turned in, made large enough, with a good large flap and *one of your dogs in with you*, well its warm.

Little tricks of the trail! Plenty of fat, the fattest bacon you can buy. Fat, fat and more fat is what you want to keep cold out. Learn to eat Eskimo meals. Walrus, seal and whale blubber and plenty of it. Flour, beans and bacon and *not fancy advertised foods*. To make a fire quickly?

Well I always carried some splinters of pine with plenty of resin on it. Then if I was crossing tundra country, and knew that it would be a day or two before I met wood or an igloo, I always carried a little wood with me; carefully dried wood at that.

But the great thing is to make oneself travel and live native Eskimo fashion. Seal and walrus are not nice until you get used to them, but it is much better than starving. Now there is this funny thing about the Eskimos. They are really divided into two distinct peoples. Both Eskimos, but yet living in entirely different ways, and one would starve in the territory of the other. This still applies to the Eskimos around the north of Hudson Bay and the very far north, and to the Tchuck-chis-Siberian Eskimos, but not to the Eskimos of Alaska, who under the careful guardianship of Uncle Sam, are now all wealthy.

One lot of the Eskimos are the Seal Eskimos

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

and the others Caribou Eskimos. The former are entirely on the coast, the others are inland several miles from water. One obtains everything they need from the seal, the others from the caribou.

At one time, and that in recent years, the population of the Eskimos in Alaska and the Tchuck-chi Peninsular must have been many times what it is to-day. I think that there cannot be more than eight to nine thousand Eskimos in all Alaska, and certainly not more than three to four thousand in the Tchuck-chi country. On the islands such as Lawrence Island, the greater and lesser Diomed Islands and St. Michaels Island I have seen traces of large communities which have dwindled down to a couple of igloos with a population of ten or twelve or even to nothing at all. This has been caused by the barbarous treatment they received at the hands of the Russians when they owned Alaska, and later at the hands of the American whalers who used to make their winter quarters at Point Barrow and at the Mackenzie Delta.

Nome City, is on the Seward Peninsular, Alaska, and lies at the mouth of the Snake River, on a tundra plain which sweeps back to a range of low hills. It is from these hills that the gold has been washed for countless ages. When I first went to Nome, a few weeks after Lindblom, Lindberg and Brintlesen had discovered gold, there were only two summer igloos which housed fourteen Eskimos, men, women and children. These summer igloos had been built on a steep bank which divided

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Snake River from the sea. But farther along from Nome City and towards what is now known as Penny River, there was a spot which had always been a meeting place for Eskimos the Uliuvangmiut, the Qavjasamiut Eskimos from Port Clarence and the northern parts of the Seward Peninsular, the Kiningmiuts from as far north as Cape Prince of Wales, Cape Lishurne and Point Barrow, the Ungarloldlermiuts from the head of Norton Bay, the Buckland River and the Kobuk River, the Siorarmiuts from the Lawrence and Diomed Islands, and the River Eskimos from the mouth of the Yukon River and even as far up it as Nulato.

I think that of all the inhospitable places I ever saw in the Arctic, the Diomed Islands—the lesser and greater—are the worst. These islands have steep, precipitous sides, rising out of the Behring Sea at angles of forty-five degrees. For three hundred days in the year the islands are wrapped in dense fogs; and when the weather is clear, they are swept by the most terrific gales, this causes a ground swell, making landing almost impossible for days at a time. I have known these islands to be completely cut off from all communication with the outside world for two months. Even in winter, when the sea is frozen into one great ice-field, these storms will spring up and for miles round the islands there will be nothing but a mass of crashing and pounding of the ice floes, while in the distance can be heard the booming of the great field as it breaks up at the edges.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

I have visited these islands several times, on one occasion I stayed there for two weeks, but I never landed without wondering why these people cling to such an uninviting inhospitable and absolutely barren place to live.

CHAPTER THREE

THE DIOMEDE ISLANDS—MANNER OF LIVING—RITES
AND CEREMONIES—SUICIDES—WHY AND WHEN—I GO
AFTER A GIANT WALRUS—WATCHING THE SEA FREEZE
—CURING FURS—HOW DONE AND WHAT USED—HOW
TO KEEP YOUR FUR CLOTHES DRY

WHEN one can land, it is like climbing into houses which have been built on the tops of very long stilts and one has to use long ladder-like contrivances to get up to them, crawling through an opening in the floor to enter. These igloos, which the islanders use in summer and winter, are built on great piles—trees which are washed down every year from the mighty Yukon River. These great tree trunks, some eighty to ninety feet long, support the igloos, leaning out over steep precipices and are lashed to the rocks by thick ropes made of plaited walrus hide, some of these ropes being as thick as a man's forearm.

The Diomedes Island Eskimos, though not in any way different from other Eskimos, are the tallest I ever met. They are also the best craftsmen. Their weapons, ky-aks, barabarras, umiaks, harpoons and hunting gear are the finest, best made and most efficient in the Arctic. They are a hardy breed,

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

even for Eskimos. Perfect athletes, marvellous boatmen and hunters, frugal and intensely religious. All are Roman Catholics, and many have been to school at the Catholic Missions at the mouth of the Yukon River. They live from year to year principally on seal, walrus and fish. Funnily enough, though not more than twenty miles separates them from the Alaskan mainland, their dialect differs considerably from that of the mainland Eskimos. One word will show what I mean. On the mainland we called a dog, ki-muckta or ki-mogen; they called dog kip-mick.

These islanders were always intensely interested in two ceremonies—perhaps celebrations would be a better word. These two occasions were at births and deaths. Here their religious beliefs—Roman Catholic—did not seem to matter so much with them. I shall never forget the first time I saw them celebrating a death. In the igloo in which I was staying there had been a young child—a girl—of about ten, who had been seriously ill with mumps. This by the way was an illness which used to kill off hundreds of Eskimos. This little girl had caught a severe chill with her mumps and was dying. A great shaman who was visiting the island was called in to attend to her. For a price—many skins and much blubber—he agreed to practice his spells on the child. All that night the old shaman danced and pranced around the bed of the dying child—driving the evil spirits away, but about morning the child died. The body was immediately taken out of the

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

igloo and placed on a death platform. This was a small floor built on four, long, pole uprights. After placing the body on this, the father made a collection of all his hunting implements, even to his ky-ak and burnt the lot. Then other members of the community gave him a duplicate of each article he had burnt.

On the birth of a child, the father and mother would collect all the furs and other things which constituted wealth to them, and distribute these to all the people who had come to help them celebrate the great occasion. This would often leave the parents heavily in debt for several years.

They had another peculiar custom, this was in connection with the building of a ky-ak, I met something similar in my early days in British Columbia when living with the Haida Indians, the greatest seafaring people—pirates—on the Pacific Coast. When the Diomedé Islanders built a single or tandem ky-ak, this was always done with the most solemn rites, which were not deviated from by the slightest thing being altered or omitted.

These rites were always carried out in the presence of a shaman, and he would watch to see that everything was done at the correct moment and in the prescribed way. If this was not the case the safety of the hunter would be jeopardized and he would be certain to be unlucky in all his hunting. It has always struck me as strange, that in all my travels in all quarters of the world, civilized and savage, the priests and shamans, witch-doctors practi-

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

tioners of magic and mumbo-jumbo all impress on their followers, that unless they approach their Diety with the exact ceremonies they recommend and go through the exact motions they prescribed, then that Diety will simply pay no heed to their solicitations.

During the whole of the period in which a Diomedes Island hunter was engaged in building his ky-ak, he was prohibited from having any sexual intercourse with his wife, and not even allowed to live in the same igloo with her. He would go to the ka-jim (community meeting and dancing house) and here his wife would bring him his food the very last thing at night. For, whilst engaged on the building of the ky-ak, not a particle of food must pass his lips from the time he took his tools up in the morning, until he put them away at night and rested in the ka-jim.

Every part of the work, such as making the frame, sewing the parts of the skin together, fitting the skins on the frame and so on, had certain rites which must be done first. Then when the ky-ak was finished there were most elaborate ceremonies which had to be supervised by the shaman. It was duly consecrated on land, and then there was the launching ceremony, but at this last only one woman was allowed to be present and she must be a young girl virgin. No other female was allowed near, until the hunter had completed a journey round the island in it. Women were unclean and should one come near the new boat or touch it, then

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

it was certain that all the denizens of the deep would scent the craft from miles away and that hunter never kill another seal or walrus. The ceremony of launching took place just as the first rays of the sun rose above the horizon.

Another peculiar belief of the Diomedes and Lawrence Islanders was that, during the months of November, called the month of 'Thin Ice', and December, the month of 'Dancing', women were not only looked upon as unclean, but as bringing bad hunting to the men who had intercourse with them. During these months they were not allowed to sleep with their husbands, and when bringing or serving them with their food, they were forced to wear the waterproof garment made from seal's intestines.

During the months of November and December all singing and dancing had to be done at night; then towards the last week in December came the purifying of the women, they were forced to stand naked in the igloos. First every crevice and opening being closed so that no air could get in. Then fires were lighted and the women stood perfectly still with the perspiration pouring off them. Then their husbands came in and rubbed them down from head to foot with fresh snow.

It was on the Diomedes that I witnessed one of the most pathetic cases of suicide I ever saw in the Arctic. Suicide was very prevalent in those days and always when there had been a bad hunting season, this meant every seventh year then.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

I knew that it was useless to protest, I had tried this previously in similar cases in the North and always received the same reply:

"I am old. Too old to hunt. Food is scarce. There is no one who will hunt for me and feed me. If I go on living I shall linger for long and starve. I shall suffer much. It is better that I make an end now. As I have no furs to give the shaman, he will not do it for me."

In this particular case, the old man who was going to kill himself was totally blind, but, in his day he had been one of the most noted hunters in all that part of Alaska. In the whaling ships he was known as the most daring and skilfull of all the native hunters. One day, whilst attacking a huge white bear, with only his bear spear, he had received a blow from the bear's paw which tore one of his eyes out. Slowly but surely he went blind in the other.

The ordinary procedure would have been for the old fellow to make himself a small igloo, shut himself up in it and strangle himself with a long piece of seal rawhide. The old hunter had his own ideas. As the top of the sun rose a few feet above the horizon that December morning, the old hunter, led by one of his sons, stood on the edge of a cliff. His son told him when the sun had reached its highest point. Then the old man made an invocation to his old gods, the gods of the hunter. Thanked them for all the fine hunting they had given him, then with the hunters' cry which he makes when he

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

has made a good kill, the old man threw himself into the sea and the churning ice pans below.

Now I had been very friendly with the old hunter and had spent many hours listening to the almost unbelievable stories he would tell of hunting around Point Barrow in the broken ice-packs off that Point. He would tell me of the almost incredible ferocity, cunning, enormous size and remarkable tenacity of life of the giant walrus. Harmless he may be—and usually is—when on land or on an ice-field, but in the water he is of another calibre.

A cat may have nine lives. A walrus has eighteen when in his own element—the water.

I had heard previous tales from Eskimos of fights to the death between men alone in ky-aks who had been attacked by walrus, this usually in the rutting season. These hunters would be armed with only their ivory-headed harpoons. Think of that, and remember that a walrus' hide is tremendously thick and tough, and that it is almost impossible to get an ordinary knife to cut it. Then again, think of some of these beasts weighing as much as three tons and with ivory tusks which are as much as four feet long from where they protrude from the beasts head.

Soon after the old man's suicide I had a fight in a tandem ky-ak with a walrus, which gave me something to remember.

The weather had been fine, cold, clear and not a breath of wind for several days. The ice was

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

beginning to pack around the edge of the larger Diomede, on which I was living at the time, waiting to cross to the Siberian side. Food with the islanders was scarce and I had been advising them to cross to St. Michaels and winter there as I knew that Captain Walker, the Fort Commandant, would not let them starve—a kinder man never lived.

Then word came that three giant walrus had been seen on the floes. Four single ky-aks immediately went out; I went in a tandem ky-ak with an islander paddling. I carried with me my 45'90 Winchester repeater. We soon spotted what I took to be a giant female alone on a large pan. It turned out that this was not a female, but a huge bull without tusks. I have never seen its like in the North before or since. It looked to me more like the huge sea-elephants one meets off the island of Galapagos. Yet it had not the long, protruding nose those beasts have. The body of this brute was slashed in alternate dark slate and bluish grey stripes, much like the body of a leopard seal; it displayed a ferocity which was most unusual, as malignant as that of a tiger or puma and took more killing than any grizzly bear.

* * * * *

The sun's rays beat down on us as we threaded our way through the broken, swirling ice-pans and I was thinking what an ideal day it was for hunting.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Three great grey gulls flapped lazily overhead. The sea in places was thick with sea-lice, most unusual for that time of the year.

At last my hunter called to me that the walrus we had been making for had taken to the water. He then paddled to a large pan and clambered ashore with a line in his hand. Then began forcing a smaller pan away to make a lane through which to tow the ky-ak.

I was sitting quietly in the ky-ak, for though I had had considerable experience with this fragile craft, I never felt like taking too many liberties in one. It takes an Eskimo to master them. I was sitting in the front compartment, when I saw something huge and massive pass across the bows; pass as swiftly as lightning itself. In that second it struck me what it was and I screamed to the islander: "Walrus! Walrus!"

He gave me one look of startled surprise as he rose from his stooping position, and jumped back on to the larger floe. The brute flung itself on to the floe and in a second knocked the hunter into the water. Then I fired and hit it. Finally I got the islander back into the ky-ak, but blood was pouring from a bad wound in his left forearm.

In addition to my repeating Winchester, we had on the ky-ak one large whaling harpoon. This had a splendid head of steel, sharp as a razor and with wide, deep barbs. This head was fitted into the shaft so that it was removable and to the head was attached two hundred feet of seal-line. This was

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

carefully coiled just in front of the islander, and to this line were attached two floats.

Now we started to hunt that walrus. I made up my mind that we would get him at all costs. We paddled out through the narrow lead and after quite two hours of constant watching, I caught sight of a movement in a lead where there was much mush-ice. Then I saw that this was the walrus. The great brute must have measured quite twenty-five feet long and now it was swimming about, indolently, evidently feeding on what it could catch.

Here looked to me to be the chance for a kill. Making sure that all the gear was in order, I got the harpoon ready, while the islander paddled slowly forward.

At this moment it must have been quite fifty yards from the ky-ak. Suddenly the islander let out a cry, telling me to look to my left; I did and there not thirty feet from the ky-ak was the great striped brute, swimming towards us at an angle, its head cleaving the water, making a bow curve like a small submarine on the surface. It swept majestically by at a distance of not more than ten feet from the ky-ak. I let him have the harpoon with all my weight and strength behind it. I got the harpoon home beautifully, just level with and behind the base of its neck.

With a snorting bellow the great beast threw itself clear of the water and then dived; the wave it made nearly upsetting the ky-ak. Out came the

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

shaft, while the line ran out like lightning, then the two large floats hampered it and it came to the surface again, the line coming tight with a terrific jerk, almost making the ky-ak's bows go under water.

The great brute went along for about a mile. Then suddenly the line slackened and before I realized it the beast had turned and I saw that he was coming directly towards the ky-ak. I told the hunter to take my rifle, while I adjusted another head to the ten foot lance and waited—with the 'wind up'.

In Central Africa and Central America I have looked into the eyes of charging elephant, buffalo and panther. Put all the fury and deadly hate of these together and it would be nothing to the cold, devilish, blood-mad fury of that walrus which I now saw rushing towards us with the speed of a torpedo. The great bullet-shaped head, with its dull naked eyes—dull yet flashing and gleaming with murder. The impression the gigantic sea mammal gave of terrific power and strength, made me feel that we had little chance of escaping in our frail craft. I began to wish heartily that I was back on the island or that the ky-ak had been a good, stout, whaler's boat.

As the mighty striped beast got closer, I could see that its great front flappers and split tail formed whirlpools at each stroke. The islander fired with my Winchester and let the charging brute have five shots, but these seemed to have no effect. I

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

crouched my lance under my arm exactly as any Lancer trooper would have done. Just as he got alongside, coming in a glancing direction, I got him in the middle of his great belly. It ripped him, and he glanced off, his side rubbing slightly against the ky-ak. It trembled, turning it over at such an angle that I felt sure that we were gone.

The islander, cool and plucky devil, what consummate nerve he had, shot another five shots into the great animal. It came alongside us, then seemed to wait as if making up its mind what to do. At last it swam slowly away for about fifty feet.

Once again it headed right for us, but by now I had handed the harpoon to the islander and taken the Winchester. The islander got it with the harpoon at the same instant that I opened fire at it with rifle and put ten shots into it in almost as many seconds.

The great malignant devil swerved when only a couple of feet from the ky-ak, rolled twice as a boat might which was being rocked by waves when broadside on, turned over on its side, then slowly sank.

That walrus was finished, but he had taken more lead and more punishment than many an elephant or four footed denizen of any jungle would have done.

So you see that walrus can be bad medicine.

With the help of all the other ky-aks we got him to the island. That huge brute meant meat, fuel, warmth, and many other things to the whole

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

population for the remainder of the winter. He was certainly a freak. I never met anything even resembling him before or after that.

Far north of Point Barrow, a hundred and more miles from the land and out on the main ice-field I have seen these great brutes in hundreds. Usually each bull with his harem of four to six cows and each old bull with numerous great scars on his shoulders, received in defending his cows from the advances of other tuskers.

It is fine to see the rejoicing there is in a community when a full-grown walrus has been killed. The news is received much as a family in England to-day might hear that father had won the largest prize in the football pool. Now, of course the Alaskan Eskimos have no dread of want. Thanks to the care of their Great White Father—Uncle Sam—they not only have plenty of food but are even wealthy. This is owing to the importation of reindeer from Lapland and the teaching of the Eskimos the way to handle and breed these animals.

I well remember the arrival of the first reindeer at Una-la-klik, in charge of Doctor Sheldon Jackson, Mr. Dahl, and several Laplanders in their quaint clothes. This herd was very small but in a few years it increased ten fold. For many years Uncle Sam would not permit a single animal to be killed.

The most successful of all the Eskimos in handling the reindeer and in breeding them was a squaw named Seward Mary. It was not long before she

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

had several hundred. To-day the Lomen Brothers, who have gone into the business on a great scale, own herds of several thousands and are shipping their meat out for sale all along the Pacific Coast towns.

Some years ago the Canadian Government adopted the methods of the United States for their Eskimos and bought a herd of four thousand reindeer from the Lomen Brothers. This great herd was driven across the north of the American continent to the mouth of the great Mackenzie River. The journey taking the herd four years to accomplish.

It is strange to watch the freeze up of the sea in the Arctic, so different to that of lakes or rivers. In November the land bordering on the Behring Sea and Straits—the forboding tundra—is as hard as iron, even in midsummer it only thaws out to the depth of a foot or eighteen inches; at this time the beach from Anvil Island to the mouth of Nome River, is lined with a border of ice about fifty yards wide which crackles like the report of a gun as the tides lift and wrench it free from the shore.

At this period of the year the Arctic sea will have a peculiar misty haze hanging over it; for all the world as if the water were just coming to boiling point. I always put this down to the warm water in the strong Japanese current. The Eskimos call this haze, 'sea-smoke', and when seen it is a certain indication that the sea will soon freeze and be covered with field-ice for limitless miles.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Though the last ship for the outside world must leave the Behring Straits not later than the first week in September, it is usually the last week in November before the great ice-fields have drifted in from the Behring Sea and frozen themselves solidly to the 'anchored' or shore ice. The last day or so before this occurs, the sea takes on a mushy appearance. Once the field ice has anchored, there descends on the Arctic world the terrible Arctic silence.

At first a man from the interior or from the outside world, misses the murmur and whisper of the waves beating their endless symphony on the shores. The silence becomes oppressive, uncanny, even fearful. I thought that I had experienced silence in the African deserts: that is not to be compared with the silence of the Arctic.

When the great freeze-up has come there is not a breath of wind: not a sound of a bird twittering: not the rustle of a leaf nor bough; a man seems to be absolutely alone with his Maker. I have come back from a walk and heard—with the greatest relief—the distant bark of a dog in the Eskimo village. A 'bright young person' to whom I was explaining what the Arctic shores were really like, remarked to me: "How truly gorgeous! What marvellous skating you must have! How I should *love* to go there for a season!"

When the ice in the great bays like Norton Bay, Galovin Bay and Kotzebue Sound have just frozen, it has a curious, springy feel to it, much like that of a

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

well sprung dance-floor, a swaying kind of give—but skating!

Well I did not come across a skating surface twice, in journeys totalling more than 10,000 miles along the Arctic shores. I am perfectly sure that there is not an ice-rink promoter who will ever undertake to open one up there. In twenty-four hours, with the glass at zero, the surface of the smoothest ice will become slightly slushy, this being caused by the salt working out; then from November to January, snow will fall almost every day, the wind will blow this into deep, wavy lines and ridges such as one sees on wide, sandy beaches.

From the beginning of September until the middle of November, the Eskimo women are working all day on winter clothing, sewing furs with their nimble fingers and chewing with their teeth—I will explain this later.

Tell a squaw that you want her to make you a pair of muk-luks, and she will take one glance at your feet, then go away and make them and they will be a perfect fit. Go into any igloo in October and November and you will find every woman and child over the age of six or seven, chewing the sole-edges of tough seal hides so that their needles will penetrate it, and so that it can be worked into the many tiny pleats necessary at the toes and heels of the muk-luks. By the time a squaw is forty or fifty, her teeth are worn to the stumps, for it is this chewing which also has to be done to the edges of the seal skins which go to make the ky-aks.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Here is the process used along the shores of Alaska—not in the interior—to tan furs. I found a similar process used by most of the Tchuck-chis in Siberia. The squaw first takes the skin or pelt and pegs it out on the floor of the igloo, then she scrapes it thoroughly with a blunt scraper, taking the greatest care to remove every particle of fat or other matter adhering to the skin. Then she will moisten the inside of the pelt with urine—this for the ammonia in it—and allow the pelt to dry. Then she scrapes it again, but this time with a sharp scraper, taking the greatest care that the skin or pelt is not cut. When she has done this she rubs dried, decayed brains of the animal into the pelt, then it is rolled up tightly and left for five or six days. At the end of that period the squaw unrolls it, beats out all the dried brains and rubs every part of the pelt between her hands until it is beautifully soft and pliable. This is the process used on all furs which are to be made up into wearing garments. They are supremely beautiful and I have never known an instance of the hair coming away from a pelt which had been cured in this manner. Furthermore, unlike the pelts cured by the Indians, these have no unpleasant odour attached to them.

The parkas, and trousers which one wears have the fur on the outside. I found that the best parka was one made out of fawn cariboo skins, with a hood trimming of fox fur next the face and outside this the longest wolf hair I could procure. This made a light garment and yet was splendidly warm.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Winter under-garments always had the fur on the inside, that is next to the skin. At first these tickled one a little but as they were only made from the softest skins, such as squirrel or baby seal, one quickly got used to this.

One of the greatest tricks—and most important connected with Arctic travel—is how to regulate your temperature without removing or adding to your clothing, and this is simple. All native clothes, parkas, under-garments, fur trousers and hip boots are made so that they hang loosely or fit loosely. The trousers are pulled up high so that they come much above the waist, the parka then comes over the head and hangs down to below the knees. If the day is warm, say ten to fifteen degrees below zero, with no wind blowing, then you do not need to wear your belt. Should it get colder during the day, say twenty to forty below zero, or just zero with a wind blowing, then you fasten your belt round you tightly, this keeps all the warmth in, but, and this is most important, should you begin to perspire, then you must loosen the belt at once. It is by not observing these precautions, that causes so many explorers to write about sleeping in damp clothes or damp sleeping bags.

I usually carried an extra parka and an extra pair of fur trousers on my sled on long journeys, and put these on any night when I was going to sleep out in the open, without any shelter beyond my sleeping bag. The most important thing is to avoid frost turning into damp. When the furs have a lot

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

of this on them, and it collects most of all at the seams, they must never be dried close to a fire. With ordinary care they will never get damp. It can be avoided this way. When making camp, and a man finds that he has a lot of hoar frost on his clothes, either inside or outside, he should take the garment off away from his fire or before going into an igloo, and put another garment on. Then take the parka which was frosty and lay it on the snow, beating it with a snow-shoe or stick, and after that hang it up near by the camp fire but not so close that it is directly in line with a fierce heat.

The sleeping bag is always the hardest to keep clear of damp. I found that on the return from a journey, or when staying at an igloo for several days, the best thing was to turn the two pieces inside out and hang them up for two or three days.

CHAPTER FOUR

FUR TRADING—PRICES PAID—EATING ROTTEN FISH—
THE WHY AND WHEN—PECULIAR IGLOOS—HOW MADE
AND WHERE MET—THE DANGER OF 'WET RIVERS'—
I PICK UP A DESERTED AND DYING MAN—THREE
POUNDS OF GOLD DUST—THE TALE

THE subject I am always being asked about—after that of gold, is: "Are furs plentiful up there?"

Well in all Alaska, and the part of Arctic Siberia in which I travelled, animals are to be found in varying quantities, according to the district, the year, and the amount of trapping that is being done.

When I first went to Alaska, the prices we paid for furs were exceedingly low; then prices gradually went up and up, white trappers made enormous sums, then came the slump and trappers, native and white, practically starved. Yes! The Wall Street slump hit the Arctic as hard as it did any place.

In the parts I have mentioned the trappers get all shades of marten, from the rich golden-orange to the almost black marten so highly prized. The same shading applies to mink. When I first went up there

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

trading we paid one dollar in trade for a prime marten skin and forty cents in trade for prime mink. Then there are some beaver, not many; lynx and wild cat, ermine, white and black bear and all the various shades of foxes—silver-tip, cross, white, red, blue, black.

The most valuable of all these was the silver-tip, and I have often paid as much as £75 to a trapper for one of these prime skins. I know that the Alaska Commercial Co. once bought four of these skins from one trapper and they were so fine that they paid him £150 each. Once in 1904 an order came into the North from a certain great furriers on Regent Street, telling their own and other traders that they would pay £200 each for four perfect, black-fox pelts. Cross-foxes come next in value, then blue, red, and white respectively.

Foxes are freaks in their litters. The most peculiar thing about them—at least in the wild—is that it is quite common for a fox bitch to have red, cross and silver cubs all in the same litter. Then another bitch may have litters of blue and white mixed, but blue and white will never be mixed up with the litter of red, cross and silver cubs. All along the Arctic shores it will be found that white foxes predominate as to about 150 to one blue.

These are prices which I paid at one time for furs, 1898—you still can in the extreme far North of Siberia:

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Marten in trade from 3/- to 5/- the equivalent in cash of 9d.							
Mink	„	„	1/8	„	„	„	4d.
Silver Fox	„	about	£40	„	„	„	£8
Blue	„	„	£1 10s.	„	„	„	6/-
Red	„	„	3/-	„	„	„	7d.
White	„	„	2/-	„	„	„	4d.
Polar Bear	„	about	£4	„	„	„	15/-
Black Bear	„	„	£1	„	„	„	4/-
Ermine, pure white	„	„	5d.	„	„	„	1d.

I went trapping with some Eskimos who lived at the mouth of the Kobuk River and for once refused to eat some of their food. Now raw fish—frozen of course—is not at all bad, one can soon get used to it, anyhow, many other races besides the Eskimos eat fish that way, but *gamey fish, fish which actually stinks, Ugh!*

Here is how it is got into this condition.

Fish is caught all the summer, especially salmon, and a fish similar to the Lake Winnepeg white-fish and this is kept by burying in pits. As the ground is frozen hard, this means that the side and the bottom of the pits are the same as an ice box and the fish do not decay rapidly except at the top. This becomes high and gamey. This is the piece-de-resistance to any Eskimo, much as the gamiest venison and birds were to an old Victorian epicure. An Eskimo will never spoil gamey fish by cooking it. They will be brought out of the pit and into the igloo in their semi-frozen state, flung on the floor and left there until they are ripe for eating. That means until they are partially thawed out. Then they are in a

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

mushy state. They are then skinned and the meat is pulled off the backbone, and an Eskimo will think nothing of eating a ten pound salmon this way at a meal—of course with considerable blubber. I tried several times to eat fish in this condition, but my stomach always revolted and I would be forced to leave the igloo and vomit.

Fancy a huge meal of rotten fish helped down with rancid blubber!

I made one trip to almost the head-waters of the Kobuk River with two Norton Bay Eskimos, and here for the first time I met dome-shaped igloos. Almost like the Kaffir's kraals or similar to the felt, dome-shaped houses of the Bariuts in Lower Siberia. These natives first made a circular framework of pliable boughs which allowed a floor space of fifteen feet in diameter, with the dome high enough for a six foot man to stand upright in it in the centre. Then this framework was interlaced with smaller boughs until the whole was one complete woven basket. Then moss was rammed into every crevice from the inside. The outside was plastered with mud, and then covered with walrus skins which had been well treated with blubber. The whole was banked round with snow in the winter. A small, very small hole in the roof provided the only ventilation, and the smallest fire, kept the inside of the house at a high temperature.

I went on a caribou hunt with some of these people and this was made with the Kobuk River as the highway for most of the distance. Twice the

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Eskimo left the river and we travelled through the forest. Here the snow was deep, we were forced to break trail ahead of our dogs and the going was extremely bad.

After a mile or two of this kind of travel we would go down on the river again ; then one of the Eskimos would go ahead of the dogs, holding a long sharp-pointed pole in his hand, with this he kept jabbing through the snow into the ice ahead of him. That night in camp he explained the reason to me for doing this and for leaving the river.

When the ice first forms over certain rivers in Alaska, such as the Kobuk, Buckland, Tibuk-tulik and others, there is often a fall of six to eight inches of snow in the next few days. This snow blanket prevents the ice from thickening, and is soon followed by other snow falls which will freeze and form a fairly hard surface ; while often the water underneath, coming as it does from volcanic springs, is warm enough to melt the ice after several weeks of continual flowing.

The surface snow slightly frozen as it is, may now be covering holes in the ice of from five to fifty feet. This snow may hold a man on snow-shoes, but will not hold a dog team and loaded sled, hence the danger of going through and getting wet up to the waist or even shoulders. This usually means certain death if the temperature is very low.

I left these people and cut across the portage at the head of Norton Sound, on my way to Fort St. Michaels, where I had been sent for by Captain

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Walker, the commandant, who wanted me to do some work for him.

It was the period of the Arctic winter when the sun does not rise at all. Here I was almost right on the Arctic Circle, and at midday the sun only rose to just below the horizon, so that at noon all that was seen was its glow.

When travelling at this time of the year, I would get up about three in the morning, taking an hour to get breakfast, load the sled, feed the dogs and to get under way; camping for half an hour at midday and travelling on to five or six o'clock that night. Pitch darkness, as in England, is unknown in the Arctic. Even on a cloudy winter's night, there is enough light from either the aurora or reflected from the snow, to enable a man to see a distance of from twenty to fifty feet ahead of him.

On leaving the Eskimos I had been with, I gave them all the grub I could spare, thinking that I could replenish with dried salmon at the villages at the head of Norton Bay. Running down the divide after leaving the Buckland River I began to look for signs of Eskimos at well known and popular camp sites, but every camp site I came to was deserted. At last I ran so short of food that I was forced to cut my dogs down to half rations. Anyhow, I thought, I am bound to get some grub from the two families at Wak-tolik. When I reached there I found that the two igloos were deserted. It was forty miles from there to Shack-tolik. The dogs were so weak now that I had to make a cache of all

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

my gear, and strip my sled. Then I took the two weakest of my dogs and put them on the sled and harnessed myself in their places. I kept making changes this way every few miles so that each had their rest.

The time came when I had no food left and twenty-five miles more to do to reach Shack-tolik. Then I ran across snow-shoe tracks, these going in my direction. When my team got the strong smell from the fresh tracks of man, they all felt certain that this meant food, and began to pull with all their old strength and energy.

Then I rounded a wooded point on the bay, saw a fire and came on—tragedy. A man was sitting at it, starving and almost dead.

I killed the poorest of my dogs that night, ate the best parts with the stranger and fed the skins, bones, and refuse to the team.

Then I heard his tale. . . .

* * * *

“We had been prospecting up back of Norton Bay towards Kotzebue. Giant Willard was not much of a miner, he was almost a cheechaco, but I knew where there was pay dirt and so we went fifty-fifty. He had just come in and had a fair amount of grub. I was busted.

“Well, stranger, it turned out as how Giant was a proper grub guzzler. Night and day that geezer would be at the grub pile. Then he had bad luck.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

While working on the claim, our cabin caught fire, and burnt down with every pound of grub, except what we had at the claim. That was less'n seven pounds of bacon and a few handfuls of flour.

"We started out that night for Fort St. Michaels, decidin' that we could make a cut right across the ice from Shack-tolik Point, leavin' the coast miles on our left.

"Risky to do that?

"Sure was. But at that there was not much choice. Reckoned as how we might as well freeze out on the ice as starve. Well! We had mighty hard goin' through the forest up Kotzebue way. Weather got mean and for three days we had to hole up. That meant that we was eating grub as we couldn't afford; and we was livin' on small rations at that.

"At last we got goin' again. It was the third day after this when the Giant turned real nasty. He'd been actin' mean for some time. Then—I was behind him—the Giant passed his fur-mitted hand over the small pack which lay in the small of his back. I seed him feel it, then he cursed aloud real hearty.

"On every side, as far as we could see in the darkness which was fast gatherin', the blamed snow stretched in untold miles. The blamed Arctic silence was only broken by the sighin' of the slight wind in the trees. 'Onest, I heard a great white owl hoot. 'That's sure bad luck, Giant,' I calls out to him. It was all right; bad luck for me.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

“Giant cursed aloud. Then he went on in a mean, sneerin’ voice :

“ ‘Three pounds of gold dust. Three rotten pounds of the gol-darned ’dust. Gee whiz! Why say you blasted runt!’ he was meaning me, ‘at the A.C.Co’s. or the N.A.T. and T. Co’s. stores, that would mean fat bacon, cawfee, lashings of syrup, plenty of flour and several bottles of hootch. Here it means just nuffin. Just three damned pounds of ’dust. Three extra pounds weight fer me to carry.’

“He always called me the Runt or the Dwarf, mostly the Dwarf. I’m only five feet as you see. Well the Giant started to trudge ahead again, and me behind him. Me head bent down, mechanically placin’ each of my snow-shoes in the tracks made by the Big Feller.

“Slung on me back was me pack, but this only held me blankets, but even so, I was findin’ it all I could do to keep up with the Big Feller.

“Then the Giant started again. Shoutin’ aloud in his rage :

“ ‘Ice, snow, one god-damned leg frozen to the calf, me guts gnawin’ like as if there wus a million rats inside me, eighty miles to the Fort doctor, a meal or some hootch to marm me belly! Fer wat, Runt? Fer wat yer blasted little noosance? Three pounds of ’dust.’

“Then as he finished he stopped dead right in his tracks, swung round like a flash and faced me. He took two steps which brought him up to and towerin’ over me, then he says :

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

“ ‘Dwarf, wat yer got ter say?’ ”

“I raised me head and looks up at him. I was dead tired, exhausted and all in.

“ ‘Why, Big Feller,’ I says ter him. ‘I’s about done. I’m cold. Mighty cold. Can’t seem to get any warmth in me. I’m dead beat and cold. How’s that leg of yourn, Big Feller?’ ”

“ ‘Don’t know, Dwarf,’ then he bent down and felt it with his hand. Then kicked it with his snowshoe. He was wearin’ those wide Canadian packs.

“ ‘Can’t feel nuffin! Ain’t done since mornin’,’ he said.

“He dumped his pack down beside him. Then he laid his Winchester beside it. Takin’ good care to keep the muzzle clear of the snow.

“ ‘Oh hell! Let’s eat or I’ll eat me damned mukluks,’ he snarled at me.

“We broke down a small dead tree, and soon had built a good fire in the lee of a large snowbank. I undid my small pack, he did the same and laid out the contents. He stood eyein’ the stuff for several minutes. A nasty look on his face.

“ ‘Dwarf,’ he finally said. ‘That’s great. It surely is great! Some mighty grand feast! Less’n three pounds of fat bacon, and a few beans and that’s all. Gawd to think of it!’ He snarled at me angrily.

“ ‘Gosh! It sure beats hell, don’t it? Our total outfit.’ He takes and kicks the pack and curses for minutes on end. Then goes on: ‘Three pounds of sour belly, one rifle, one blasted shell for it and three pounds of ’dust. I’m nearly forty and got half a leg

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

frozen. Why say! I'll bet it's mor'n eighty miles to Fort St. Michaels.'

"I grinned and said: 'Well, I'm chef. Wat'll it be mister man, you'se is the doctor. A nice fat juicy steak, or a large cut from the joint?'

" 'Both,' he answered and cursed me.

" 'Hurry up and cook and quit her kiddin' or I'll eat it raw. Let's get somethin' in me guts.'

"By the time we had eaten a few mouthfulls each of the fat bacon—all that the ration permitted—it had got dark. The stars overhead were glitterin' and lookin' fine and the snow clouds were beginin' to race acrost the sky.

"Giant sat there suckin' at his pipe, then felt in the pocket of his heavy mackinaw coat for any crumbs of terbaccer there might be there in the corners.

" 'We'll take a couple of hours rest, Dwarf,' he said. 'P'raps by then this cursed wind'll let up.'

"I was only too ready. The cold was tellin' on me. He glanced at me, but this time I was drowsy with the cold and noddin'. I heard him through my freezin' stupor, then he looked at the two packs at his feet.

" 'There's two pounds there at least of good sour belly.' He whispered aloud in an awed voice. Even as he spoke, a few large flakes of snow began to fall. He took his empty pipe from his mouth and put it in his mackinaw coat pocket.

"As in a dream I heard him say: 'Guess I could

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

make it, travellin' real light as I'll be, and could make fast time at that. If I take the rifle, I'll leave the 'dust to make weight for it. Curse it, anyway. Dust! To hell with it! But I just gotta take the grub though, to make it to the Fort.'

"Then just as he was movin' off and I was kinda dozin', he said:

" 'Curse the little bastard, he can't stand anyfink,' and bendin' down he took up his pack and slung it over his back.

* * * * *

"Two hours later I came out of my stupor. Gawd knows how or why I missed the Giant. Thought I'd been dreamin'. My eyes roved to the single pack. The other was gone. So was the rifle. Panic-stricken, and now wide awake I realized the truth.

"The Big Feller's skinned out. He's gone, I screamed aloud in my panic. I had never thought that of the Giant. He had always said that real pardners stuck.

"You knows yerself stranger, that that is the rule wat's never broken in the North.

"I got up, picked up the pack, I thought:

" 'Three pounds of 'dust and not a bite to eat. three pounds, that'd be say six hundred dollars worth of ham and eggs, with lashings of cawfee in old Chicago. Here it ain't worth a lousy doughnut.'

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

“I stood hesitatin’, thinkin’. And now a few hours after youse comes on me. I calls it a miracle.”

* * * * *

Here follows the Giant’s tale as told by himself and pieced together by me from facts which came out later on. Much of it he told when well and sane. Much came out whilst he was delirious and being nursed at the Fort. . . .

Some miles away after leaving the Dwarf, the Giant floundered on. He crossed some flat ground, made a portage over a point in the bay, dropped out into a small valley. Still nearly eighty miles straight to the Fort. If the snow didn’t get too bad, and his leg held out, well may be in three days he’d make it. And only three matches left in the little waterproof bundle. He came to a creek, crossed on the thin ice, heard a noise in the woods, stopped to listen and—crack, the ice gave beneath him and down he went to the firm ice below, up to his neck in six feet of icy water.

Then he scrambled out. Not a rag on him which was not soaked through and through. His teeth grinding on the pipe stem he had stuck in his mouth to control his chattering jaws. After struggling belly flat along the ice, he reached the bank. Here he squeezed what water he could from his clothes, but very soon they began to stiffen as they froze solidly on him. Tearing down some small dead

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

trees, he felt for his matches. They had gone. They were at the bottom of the creek with his rifle.

For quite a minute he stood panic stricken. The Fort he knew must be three to four days away at least. That is in the condition he was in. Even now the piercing, Arctic frost was finding his wet body through his freezing mackinaws. His legs were getting numb where the water drained into his Canadian shoe-packs.

He cursed bitterly making the air ring with curses of fear. The biting, stinging frost brought him to his senses. Standing there he realized was certain death. Death! The fear and hate of it sharpened his wits. To keep moving rapidly he knew was the only chance he had of making the Fort. Clamping his teeth on his pipe stem, he again started on the eighty mile race against death.

When day broke, he had done about fifteen miles. He said that for eleven hours without a single stop his feet had pumped up and down like two piston rods in the soft clinging snow. They did it so mechanically that he could not even feel them moving. There was some painful feeling in his calves and thighs, but by noon even this feeling had gone.

The wind cut through his icy-surfaced mackinaws, sucking into his freezing flesh and sending terrible, nerve-wracking, agonizing, stabbing shivers through his chest. His breath began to come in horrible, torturing gasps, rasping the inside of his chest and his lungs as he sucked it in.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

At nightfall it came.

Instantly. Without the slightest warning.

It shot through under his left shoulder blade, piercing through to his chest. He knew what it meant. A long, tearing, red-hot thrust that stopped him in his stride as a bullet from his own Winchester would have done. It made him shriek aloud in agony. He could not get his breath for several seconds.

One, two, three, four strides he took. Then it came again just as he thought he was feeling better. Making him scream louder than before.

One, two, three, four; again and again came that piercing, searing, stabbing thrust through his lungs. Now he stood still, and scream after scream came from him at each red-hot thrust. The agony was terrible and the sweat poured from his face.

Then his right lung got it.

Darkness came on again. Hour after hour each lung screamed in its turn. . . . His breath came into his throat in a dry whistle. Only his jaw muscles moved as he ground them on his pipe stem. His eyes were nearly closed.

For thirty hours now he had not eaten—he'd forgotten grub. For two nights and one day his dead, frozen legs had pumped up and down. He stared rigidly ahead. Fighting that tormenting hell in his chest.

At last he dropped in the snow. Slept for some-time. Pain woke him up and saved him. He sat up, picked up the pipe which had dropped from his

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

mouth and then mechanically he felt in his mac-kina-w pocket and—found one tiny piece of a match. It was a match head, with half an inch of stick.

Rising slowly, the Giant stood up, clutching the precious little match-head in his freezing hand. Scraping some dry bark from a dead-fall, he carefully built a small pile of the driest kindlings he could find.

All was ready for the match. His very life depended on that tiny little piece of sulphur.

Shielding it carefully, he drew the match across a piece of rock. A tiny, pin-point of flame sprang at the tip of the wood. Then a curl of smoke, the match was well alight.

With the greatest care the Giant lowered the flame to the dry bark. The scrapings caught. Flared up. The brush caught and burnt briskly. He was saved. He roared aloud with relief and glee.

For an hour the Giant sat huddled by that wonderful, glorious fire; watching and playing with the flames. He half filled his pipe with a mixture of dust, wool and muck from the corners of his pockets and puffed away at it.

At last he got to his feet. He knew that he must move. To stay there long would exhaust the little strength he had left.

Once more his tired and aching feet were driven across the ice and snow. Another day and another night. Then came night again and as it did he saw the lights of some houses in the distance. He could not believe his eyes. He thought that he was

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

dreaming. What he saw were the lights of the Moravian Mission at Una-la-klik. He had not known of this place as he and the Dwarf had started out from Nome City. On he staggered until he got to the house of Doctor Karlson. This splendid man took him in; then seeing the critical state of the Giant, he had one of his best teams harnessed up and driven by Stephen, one of his best drivers, sent the Giant to the Fort. Stephen making the run in one day.

* * * * *

The Dwarf and I had beaten the Giant to the Fort by two whole days. When I got the little fellow to the military hospital he was in a bad shape. Doctor Gregory, the military doctor took charge of him immediately and Mrs. Gregory, fat, kindly, homely old lady, nursed him as only she could do.

The second week after the Giant's arrival, Doctor Gregory leaned over the Dwarf's bunk.

"Yep!" he said, answering the Dwarf's question. "I guess he'll pull through. But it was the nearest call he'll ever have until he cashes in. Yep! Pneumonia and gangrene! I've taken both legs off above the knees. The boys at the Fort and the two trading stores are getting up a subscription now, they aim to send out to Seattle and get him two fancy, wooden legs."

"Say, Doc, will you hand me my pack there?"

When the Doctor gave it to him, the Dwarf

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

fumbled in it, then held a buckskin sack out to him.

"Get the legs with that, Doc," the Dwarf said, grinning. "I guess that'll be enough. There's three pounds of 'dust in that."

And the little fellow swore me to secrecy as soon as the Doctor had left. Not a soul ever knew what the Giant had really done. What I got from him of the facts he told me in sorrow and shame, shame for his pardner, and the remainder was told me under a pledge of secrecy—and at the Giant's request—by dear old Mrs. Gregory.

As I shall never be alluding to the Doctor and his wife again, let me end by saying that they both grub-staked a miner, who staked for them in the Ophir find at the head of Galovin Bay. They went back to the States wealthy—and deserved it.

CHAPTER FIVE

ESKIMOS OF KOTZEBUE SOUND AND PORT CLARENCE—
A GREAT DANCE AND FEAST—THE MIRACLE OF THE
OOMIAK DRIVEN CUT TO SEA—ANOTHER KIND OF
IGLOO—THE AUTOMATIC HEATER, NATIVE MADE—
THE STENCHES, MEALS, MODE OF LIVING, FISHING, ETC.
—A LECTURE ON WOMEN—THEIR USES, HOW TO TREAT
THEM—EXCHANGING WIVES: THE REASON, WHEN
DONE—TALES OF BEAR HUNTS BY AN OLD HUNTER—A
VILE UNSAVORY DEN IN WHICH I SPEND A NIGHT—A
TALE OF CANNIBALISM—I WATCH A BEAR HUNT A SEAL

I SHOULD think that even to this day the district at the headwaters of the Koy-u-kuk River, the Kobuk River and from there to the Colville mountains, is the least known in all Alaska. Nearly all the natives here were Christians, converts of the Moravian Mission at Una-la-klik and another on the Koy-u-kuk River.

These Eskimos, really Innuít Indians, had a prayer for every dashed thing under creation, especially for the caribou hunters. When I was up there, one hunter by a great stroke of luck, had managed to kill twenty-eight caribou. He told all the people of his village that the Deity had given

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

him a special prayer to repeat, and that if he did, he would always get plenty of caribou. We should have called him a 'confidence trickster' in civilization. This man had been unanimously elected the Minister of his community. What was certain was that he had had the greatest success, and now charged other hunters so much each, for being allowed to use *his prayer*.

The Eskimos around Kotzebue Sound and Port Clarence are without any doubt, the jolliest and happiest in the North. To-day most of these are well educated, and many are wealthy. Things were quite different not many years ago. I spent a week with one family living in their igloo—one of six in the community. While there, two large bodies of Eskimos arrived, one of these coming from Cape Hope and the other from as far away as Point Barrow.

A dance was given for them that night.

It began with my host dancing first. This of course was in the ka-jim. His dance consisted of his giving a long, rambling account of his achievements as a bear hunter and how he hunted and killed his game, all accompanied by pantomime. Then his wife handed him the presents which he wished to distribute to the guests.

It was then the turn of the chief guest to give his performance, and his wife handed him presents which he passed round. I noticed that the shaman came off the best of all, priests always do it has seemed to me. Each person gave the cunning old

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

devil a present, but he gave none of any intrinsic value; only innumerable promises that each giver of a gift should have good hunting. One man gave him a large piece of chewing tobacco, three steel needles, a jew's harp and a good pocket-knife. The old shaman promised that man that on his next hunt he would kill two walrus. Strangely enough he did kill a magnificent walrus bull within a week.

These dances, very similar in most respects to the potlatches of the Siwash and Haida Indians of British Columbia, last for several days, consisting of dancing, singing, story telling and sports. It was during this meeting that I heard of the most amazing and miraculous escape ever known of in those parts.

A great oomiak, manned by fifteen women and five hunters, was out in a lead in the field-ice, ten miles or more from the shore, when suddenly a strong north-easterly wind sprang up. The oomiak was heavily loaded with whalebone, whale meat and whale blubber. They anchored to the floe and were blown out to sea with it. The next day the sea, except for a strip of ice a mile wide anchored to the shore, was clear of all ice and not a sign could be seen of the oomiak. Then a terrible gale sprung up and their friends gave them up for lost. This gale blew for five days. Then the ice formed again, stretching from the shore as far as the eye could see.

The oomiak crew had lightened their craft as soon as the wind sprang up, throwing every

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

particle of whalebone and whale meat overboard, keeping only the blubber. They had rifles and ammunition, and five days after the storm had abated, and now far up north of Point Barrow and in the Arctic Ocean, they were able to kill two seals and a polar bear. These they ate raw. Then they started to try and make land, hauling their oomiak from lead to lead. At last they sighted land, and this was the very cape not fifty miles away from their home.

What had happened was, that the first gale had taken them across to the Siberian side and into the strong Japanese current, which had swept them rapidly north, and then they had struck a cross-current which had taken them into the south-westerly current which brings the Arctic Ocean ice down the Alaskan side into the Behring Straits. When these natives landed, not one of them showed any signs of having undergone great privations beyond those of their usual existence.

As their summer igloos here were somewhat different and better than those in other parts of Alaska I will describe the one in which I lived for three weeks. This had been built of great trees of drift wood and the roof was supported by two trees laid across the walls. These walls were of large logs, with earth banked against the outside from eight to ten feet wide at the base, and three feet wide at the top. The floor had been dug into the ground to a depth of four feet and the roof was another four feet above the surface of the ground level. This

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

roof was flat and on it were cached the occupants' sleds, and other gear, as well as their ky-aks. In the centre of the roof was a window two feet square made from the intestines of the seal. This gave plenty of light and was waterproof.

Heating lamps were kept burning constantly, one in each corner of the igloo. These were oblong pieces of soapstone, about twelve inches wide and three feet long which had been hollowed out to a depth of three inches. The wicks for these lamps were a particular kind of long, wiry moss which grew in the district. These lamps or heaters were almost automatic. A large piece of blubber or bear fat was hung above, but not quite over the wick flames, this heated the fat which dripped, dripped, and by a nice adjustment, kept the oil in the vessel continually at the same level. The heater once adjusted carefully would burn for from eight to ten hours without any attention.

The thickness of the banked walls and the snow on the roof prevented any cold air penetrating into the igloo. The entrance, however, was almost the same as in all igloos. It was by the usual tunnel, in this case, one twenty-five feet long and covered with a timber roof until it came to within a few feet of the igloo wall, here it dipped steeply coming up in the centre of the floor, where there was a lid over its opening. In the igloo the temperature would be from fifty to fifty-five degrees all the time, while outside the glass would be showing anything from forty to fifty degrees below zero.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Four families occupied this igloo, one having each corner and the odour was as strong as in any other Eskimo dwelling, but of course I was used to it by this time and it did not worry me. The odour here was a combination of the usual semi-rotting Eskimo food, rancid blubber prevailing, and the stench from many sweating bodies that had never known a wash from the day they were born. In this igloo there was only one article of civilized make, this was a small pork barrel, which was used as a privy by all, and as far as I could observe, was never emptied from one week to the next. Of course the urine was needed for the curing of pelts.

At night they all stripped and we lay wedged like sardines. I always used my sleeping bag which got unbearably hot, but it was better than risking all the zoological specimens they had on their bodies and in their clothes.

Breakfast, or the first meal would consist of raw fish and care was always taken by their parents to see that the children had the tit-bits. Anything left over was given to their always ravenous dogs. The favourite fish all along the coast was tom-cod and a squaw would catch from fifty to sixty of these in an hour out on the sea ice. In a few minutes she would have cut a hole in the ice with her ice-chisel. Her fishing appliances consisted of a rod about three feet long, a line of sinew with a bent nail at the end, with the point well sharpened, about three inches above this a tiny piece of red flannel was tied—or something equally bright. The squaw keeps

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

jiggling her stick up and down, pulling up sharply directly she feels a bite or nibble at the bait above the hook, this jerk causes the nail to hook the fish in the belly or head.

Some of the women had their regular fishing holes; they would build round these a circular wall four feet high and a hummock of snow to sit on close to the hole. A woman fishing from eleven to three—the usual hours—could easily catch from sixty to seventy pounds of fish, but owing to weather conditions, fishing every day was impossible.

It is hard to make the outside world understand the position occupied by an Eskimo woman. The man seldom illtreats his wife—but often beats her. Nar-gar-chuk, the Eskimo who travelled with me more than any other in Alaska, explained in this way.

“Women must be punished at times. It makes them obedient. She will love us more then,” the equivalent of the East End saying of: “Don’t yer love us ’Arry? Well why don’t yer knock us abart?” “After we have done this she is more pleased. If my wife’s love is to be kept warm, she must know that I am the stronger and to be obeyed.

“I must provide for my wife. She looks to me and clings to me for food and clothing. If I am the provider, then I must be the master. If she gets silly ideas as women will, then I must beat them out of her.

“All women are a nuisance when not controlled properly.”

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

For all that this may sound unkind, among all the savage tribes I have lived with, nowhere have I met happier women than among the Eskimos. They do not lead an unhappy, nor down-trodden, cowed existence. She gets her beatings at times, but she has a strong, healthy body; she is light-hearted and has a well balanced mind. She is essentially her husband's partner as well as his plaything. From the age when she is able to talk, she begins to be conversant with all sexual matters, for these are done openly in the igloo as a matter of course. According to the locality—the farther north the younger—she is ready for mating at from twelve to sixteen, and she grows up with the knowledge that there are at least five men to every three women (these conditions have now altered in Alaska and parts of Arctic Canada) and that she will soon become part of a hunter's equipment, for unless a hunter secures his woman how will he get his skins dressed, his muk-luks and his clothes made?

Then she must produce children for him. There is not a greater shame to an Eskimo woman than to be barren. They must be men-children for preference. Eskimos are passionately fond of children. If a man marries a widow with children he must look after and provide for these. Where polyandry exists—now only with the Tchuck-chis in Siberia—it is a matter of mutual arrangement between the husbands when she is used by them.

In civilized life, the clever and tactful wife usually rules the roost and is able to get what she

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

wants, and there are few Eskimo women who are not equally efficient and diplomatic in this respect.

In all sexual matters the man's wishes and will are law, and her Eskimo sisters would be the first to take sides against her if she acted or thought otherwise. She is her husband's property, and, by Eskimo custom, stronger than any law, he can use her when he wishes or lend her to another man for a night or a week, without in any way consulting her.

This is most often done on hunting expeditions, and the squaw will know nothing about what her husband has arranged about the matter, until a strange man lays beside her and she sees her husband do the same with another woman. A stranger arriving at a village or single igloo will always be offered the choice of one or two women for the first night—not after. When an exchange has been made for a winter, the child born by the woman remains in her care—if a male—and is cared for by the woman's husband as his own.

The woman whom all look down on and despise is the one who is barren; to overcome this she will pay a shaman to stay with her and even make a journey from village to village having a different man with her at each.

In some of the far northern lands, such as Prince Patrick Island, Melville Island, Victoria Island and the Tchuck-chi Peninsular, there, will be found a ka-jim which may only be used by young un-

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

married men and virgins of marriageable age. Here many marriages are arranged. The young virgins spend one night—never more—with young men; should this end in a mutual liking, the parents are told, gifts are made by the young man to the father and the mating is permanent.

The shores on either side of the Behring Straits are almost identical in appearance; about the most forlorn of any part of the world, especially in the winter. Then there is nothing to be seen but the wind-swept tundra or cliffs of dark, slaty-rock, absolutely bare, with grey patches of moss stretching on them in places. In some parts there are slight traces of coal to be seen. It was on the Behring shores of the Seward Peninsular the first—but by no means the last—time I heard of the two great water-ways said to penetrate right through the ice-fields of the Arctic Ocean and far up towards the North Pole.

An old Eskimo hunter named Ika-luk-pitak told me that he had travelled up these two great inland rivers, that the entrances to them were several miles wide but that they gradually narrowed as they got farther and farther north. That there were fast currents in them running north, and that the water in them was warmer than that of the sea. Also that though these rivers narrowed in the winter, they never closed entirely. He went on to explain that very far to the north, branches ran off these rivers and that by these he could reach any parts. It should be remembered that though the

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Atlantic side of the Arctic regions have been explored and mapped, there is a vast area to the north of Alaska and Eastern Siberia which is still unknown—*by whites*.

All he told me was confirmed by a conversation which I had with Captain Cook of the whaler *Bowhead*, and others with Captain Potter of the whaler *Jeanette*, and Captain Klindenberg, the 'Lone Wolf' of the Arctic who skippered the *Olga*. This last man knew more about the Arctic Ocean than any man in the North. He had gone there as a lad of sixteen, lived there all his life, had married an Eskimo woman, by whom he had several children, and was constantly making voyages of several hundred miles in whale boats or oomiaks.

Old Ika-luk-pitak took me one day to where, as he said, "the ice devils spoke." From the highest cliff of a promontory I saw an ice-field many miles long and as wide. This was moving and seemed to hit the anchored—shore ice—at a speed of quite ten miles an hour. The cliff trembled as the ice-field began to break with an ear-splitting noise. Great slabs of ice as large as London squares, and twenty feet thick were forced out of the water and shot into the air, to fall back again with a tremendous report. Other slabs a mile long and fifty feet wide, were forced up against the face of the cliff until in places there was a parapet of ice which must have been two hundred feet high. Here I was made to realize what mighty powers Nature has at her call in the North; how truly stupendous the forces are

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

in those regions and what wealth the Arctic has for the use of future generations.

Whilst with the old hunter, I visited—for one night only—the vilest igloo I ever drew breath in; it nearly choked me. It belonged to some Eskimos from south of East Cape, on the Siberian side.

To enter it I went down the usual tunnel and came up through the hole in the floor. The outside of this igloo looked like a mound of turf or sods. Inside everything was thick with black grease. I lit my candle-lantern and looked around me. My God, that was an unsavory den indeed! The stench made me retch at once. That stink! There was never anything like it. It was the vile stench of putrid, rancid, rotting blubber combined with untold filth. In one corner was a mass of decaying entrails, a pile of fish-bones and of animals' bones. On one side was a bed of skins made of stinking furs, and in another corner a pile of excrement; and in a space of seven feet by nine feet lived eight people. Whilst eating my meal there that night, these people, stripped to the waist, enjoyed a meal of almost putrid walrus meat and blubber.

Unluckily, after my meal, I moved a pile of bones to enable me to unroll my sleeping bag. This stuff gave off such a diabolical stench that I was forced to go out and vomit. Had it not been blowing a regular norther, I would never have gone back to that awful animals' lair. Not even the stench of a 'gator's or croc's den smelt any worse.

That night old Ika-luk-pitak told me of some of

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

his experiences hunting the mighty polar bear, the White King of the North.

"I was young then," he said, "only a boy who had seen seventeen snows (years). It was one of the bad years. (He meant one of those years when almost all animals in the North seem to disappear.) Famine was amongst us. We travelled into the interior. We caught some salmon, not many. It was soon pee-luck (gone). We had too many big bellies with us. Soon my father and mother died. Those who were left ate them. I saw them eaten. Then everything was sta-pee-uck-tuck (completely gone, not a scrap left). Two of the men wanted to eat me. I killed one. We drank his blood. Soon my brother died. We made an igloo and ate him.

"Only three were saved out of thirty-eight.

"Many times has death been at my side. I do not fear him. What does it matter."

Then he sat for several minutes puffing at some tobacco I had given him. Suddenly he reached across and patting my shoulder, looked into my face, and smiling, said :

"I should like to kill one more bear first."

The old fellow was sitting telling this in a sing-song monotone, his knees bent, his body tilted forward. The half-naked men and women listening intently, clearly understanding his feelings.

Monotonous, primitive, even stone-age, but by God ! It was life !

It was not boring ! It was real, vivid, not a rotten sham !

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

To me it was everything. It was what I have craved for all my life and sought in four continents—experience, a thrill. The real thing; and not cynical hypocrisy. It is my love for such things and such life that has always enabled me to make friends with savage races and to understand them. To get their affection and their loyalty.

The old hunter was now given a huge chunk of walrus meat, this he sat and chewed for some minutes. He must have enjoyed the stuff for his face wore a satisfied smile.

Suddenly he arose, stripped off his caribou undergarment, and showed us his back. It was torn into deep ridges. Old, old scars.

“Bear,” was his laconic remark.

“It was when the time was very cold. Good time for bear hunting. Then they are after seal. I was hunting bear with my dogs. My best dog ran behind an ice-pile then he began barking much. I knew that he had found bear. Soon he returned, dragging his back legs. His back was torn and broken. A bear had hit him.

“That bear must die, I said.

“I found that bear hidden between two large pieces of ice which made a cave. It was very small. I could not attack him with my lance. I drew my hunting knife and crawled in towards him. I drove my knife up into his belly. One, two, three times. . . . I felt his claws rip my back. He fell over dead.

“I got back to my igloo. For many days I was near death.”

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

He stopped. Then he helped himself to more meat. Before sleeping that night he gave me some advice.

"You should not travel alone. It is bad. Take a woman for wife. She keeps you warm at night. She will look after your dogs, mend your clothes, make your muk-luks."

That night we heard the most appalling noise and the earth shook and trembled. The great tide of the year was lifting the ice-field and tearing it away from the anchored ice. The thunderous roar lasted for quite fifteen minutes and must have been heard twenty miles away. This went on until long after daylight. Great masses of ice were being forced together and then one would be shot on top of the other. Water would be forced up into tremendous jets to the height of fifty to seventy-five feet. Then as the tide fell again the din started afresh. The thunder-claps sounded like the reports of a great brigade of large calibred guns firing 'rapide'. I felt that my brain was splitting. It was like an earthquake and great volcanic eruption rolled into one.

Some days after this I watched a polar bear hunt a seal. The seal, a large one of the leopard variety, appeared to be very nervous as if scenting danger. It repeatedly dived into its hole in the ice-floe and then climbed out again. The bear lay behind a large hummock watching it and I was behind another which concealed me from both. All around were leads of from a foot to three feet wide. Sud-

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

denly the bear slid back from his post, slipped gently into the water and in less than a minute he had poked his head through the seal's hole. One sweep of the giant's paw, killed the seal who had kept still, as if paralysed with fear and astonishment.

The amount of food which a polar bear can consume is enormous. He will eat half a large seal; sleep close to the kill in a nice cosy snow-drift, then awake in a few hours and finish the remainder. Two to three hundred pounds of meat eaten in twenty-four hours. They are cunning hunters, knowing that the tip of their black noses will give them away, they will watch a seal hole with a paw covering this. The moment a seal's head appears, a blow from his great paw, quick as that of any cat, kills the seal and the great claws hook into it.

These great claws never fail to hold, and soon the seal is on the ice making a meal for the Monarch of the North. Many claim that the polar bear hibernates, this, however, I do not believe, and my opinion is backed by that of such great experts as Doctor Nansen and many others. I have seen polar bears at all times of the year, wandering about the floes, hunting and fishing. From the middle of February until the end of March, the female will retire to some cave on shore or some secluded cove well guarded by high ice hummocks, and there she will bring forth her young, but she soon leaves this shelter again. The young cubs remain with their

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

mother until she has taught them to fend for themselves, this is usually until they are from six to eight months old and up to this age there is the greatest affection shown on both sides.

CHAPTER SIX

ANGAC-KUKS (SHAMANS)—THEIR MASKS AND MAGIC—
MY DOGS AND A BAD TRIP—HOW WE BURIED A GOOD
DOG—A JEWISH PEST—HOW HE FARED—A REGULAR
HOODOO—I PREPARE FOR SIBERIA—MY OUTFIT—ITS
HOWS, WHYS AND WHEREFORES

THE largest polar bear I ever saw—or even heard of—was one I purchased for the North American Trading and Transportation Company from Captain Cook of the *Bowhead*. Captain Cook told me that this great beast tipped the scales at 1,400 pounds when killed. The skin in its rough-dried state measured ten feet five and one half inches from nose tip to rump, and its neck circumference was thirty-two inches.

With the Eskimos lived at this time one of the most famous shamans on that part of the coast. He had the best equipment of masks—most essential for any shaman. He called his most important one the Yu-ua, this mask represented the spirits of the weather, was only used when calling on them for some special reason. Another important mask of his was the Tung-haat mask, this was used for invoking the spirits of the departed, the spirits of the devils and the souls of animals who could enter into

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

the bodies of men or women. These Tung-haat spirits were mostly malicious, and could and would bring misfortune to the community unless constantly placated by him. He gave one and all to understand that he, and he alone, was the confidential friend of the Tung-haats.

The Eskimos believe that everybody and every animal has a shade, and that the shamans are the only people who are able to communicate with them, and get them to act reasonably and leave their community in peace. This old shaman claimed that when he put on one of his masks he could then see through it, and discern the spirit with whom he wished to converse.

At times this old man would claim that his body was inhabited by an evil spirit of great power and malignancy, then he would mutilate himself, often sieze a squaw and illtreat her, claim the right of intercourse with any woman, and even go so far as to tear corpses down from their caches and devour parts of them. He had even been known to seize hold of women and bite pieces from their arms.

These seizures by devil-spirits could only be stopped by making him large presents—he called them gifts to the devil spirits in him. This old shaman had one disciple or follower whom he was training. This young man claimed that his father had been a bear who had mated with his mother. He would get himself up to represent a bear, and then perform in the ka-jim. His mimicry was so

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

wonderful that one and all accepted his tale of his parentage.

I left these people to go back to Nome and decided to again make the portage over the northern part of the peninsular dividing Kotzebue Sound from Norton Bay, rather than go round by way of Cape Prince of Wales. This time all went well until I had left the river and got on to the tundra. Here the going was very bad. Heavy winds had blown away every particle of snow. It took me five days to do less than twenty miles, all this time bucking a head-wind. Once more I began to run short of grub. The tundra plain looked exactly like a field of giant mushrooms, and I was in constant dread of smashing some of my sled struts. The wind increased in violence until it was blowing a gale, and carrying with it a mixture of sand, pieces of moss, and snow which was like fine particles of steel, blowing this in my face and cutting the skin where it was exposed.

I could not even see my wheel-dogs at times. Then the dogs began to stop and refuse to face it. Several times the wind veered to one side, and twice blew the sled completely over. Although I had the greatest faith in my leader, the trail was so faint that I feared that he would not be able to keep it. Finally he stopped dead. I crawled up to him on my hands and knees, and found him sitting on his haunches whimpering, plainly at a loss. Attaching my safety line to his collar so that I could find him again, I crawled on my hands and knees to

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

either side of him to try and locate the trail. It was useless. The line was too short. I could find nothing. I got to my feet and determined to go straight ahead into the wind. It was certain death to stay where I was. I went back to the sled, tied my wrist to the handle-bars, and let my leader make his own way in the direction he thought best.

After plunging into two deep gullies, and nearly breaking the sled—and my neck, he picked up the trail again. How he did it was a marvel, but he was always like that. If I left him alone he was sure to find a way out for me. What a debt I and my fellow mushers owed our dogs! At last I camped on the shores of Norton Bay; I had my leader sleep with me in my bag that night for extra warmth. He was asleep in a few seconds and snoring as heftily as a man with asthma.

When he died several months afterwards, I buried the old fellow in his harness. "Wrap me up in my old stable jacket." Many Eskimos believe that a dog that has been a good worker for his master, and who had been buried by his master this way, will work for him in the happy, spirit-hunting grounds. Well! I should like to meet my old dogs there, and find that they had forgiven me for the many times I have lost my temper with them.

I mushed on to Kooick, here I ran across a cheechaco—greenhorn—who was on his way to Nome. Such men are always a nuisance to travel with, but this one was worse than any. He was a Jew, and always up to some petty mean tricks. For instance,

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

he would hang back and let the other fellow prepare the meal, do the chores and break trail. Yes! Quite ready to do it if asked, *but he had to be asked*. He thought it smart to accept dried salmon from the Eskimos and not give them any chai (tea) in return.

"Vy'vy should I? Did they ask me for any? Vy no! Vy should I give them if they don't ask me?" was his continual argument.

I helped the Eskimos at one place get even with him. He froze his big toe badly. I told him that unless the Eskimos thawed it out for him he would lose it. Then I told the Eskimos to make him pay well before they did this for him, they entered into the joke and made him part with a lot of his grub.

When I came to Galovin Bay, instead of running up it to Joe Dexter's, I decided to cross it at the mouth and then run round the great bluffs at Cheenik. This saves a lot of time, but is dangerous as the ice is constantly breaking away at this place and being blown out to sea. There is no anchorage-ice at these bluffs, consequently when storms arise the ice soon breaks away, the water there being so deep. Once the field-ice has broken from the cliffs, the great mass is soon on its way out into Norton Sound and then into the Behring Sea, perhaps to travel a distance of from two to three hundred miles. Once two men and a woman—all whites—were going along the coast from St. Michaels to Nome, they had come all the way down the Yukon River from Rampart City, they decided against the advice of those who knew, to go round the Cheenik

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Bluffs. They were almost round the point, and in safety, when the ice-field broke away. They tried to make the shore at the point where the cliffs shelved to the sandy beach, but got there just as the field was drifting away from the anchored-ice. By this time there was a ten foot gap. One of the men tried to jump across on the small pieces of float-ice, but fell in the icy water and slush-ice. His two companions—the man and woman—dragged him out, and were forced to watch him freeze to death before their eyes. In less than ten minutes he was a solid block of ice.

The two who were left were on the ice-field for eight days before the woman died from exposure and lack of decent food. By then they had eaten the last of their three dogs. Four days after this, the floe with the man on it was driven ashore at the mouth of the Solomon River, less than thirty miles from where the field had broken away.

Disgusted with the company of the wretched Jew schemer, I let him start out well ahead of me with his sled and two dogs. When I left the igloo there was not a breath of wind and it was an ideal day for travel. However, as I got under the cliffs I ran into a regular gale, making travelling bad, as the ice at this part was always hummocky and at times almost impassable. It was at places like this that a good leader was so valuable. He would pick his way through good places, and yet always remember that he had a team to swing and that sharp turns were impossible. I got by the bad part finally, then

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

made a direct line across the bay to Top-kok cove, where I intended to stop that night. It made a grand camping place, being well sheltered and there was always a plentiful supply of driftwood to be had there. I suppose that I have slept there a dozen times *and never dreamt that I was sleeping on millions of dollars worth of gold dust.* Here were found some of the richest of the golden sands, more than eight million dollars being taken from the small cove.

Half-way across the bay to Top-kok, with the wind now blowing a gale and carrying a smother of snow in my face, I saw a man stumbling about as if he was drunk. He had no team nor sled and I wondered what he could be doing out there. He was walking with his head bent, and his arms round it to shield himself from the wind. Twice, when extra heavy gusts hit him, they threw him to the ice. At last I came up to him.

It was the Jew. He had lost his dogs and sled, his face was all frozen and he was just about finished. I got him on to my sled, covered him over with my fur robe and got the dogs going again for Top-kok. At last I reached the only igloo there, belonging to a genial old Eskimo named Kukmuktik. His igloo was one huge mound of drift snow, the tunnel into it being quite forty feet in length, but once inside, it was the nicest and cosiest place one could wish to find after a buffeting from an Arctic gale.

How grateful we whites should have been to

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

those natives—but we took it all for granted I'm afraid. One would arrive at an igloo, unharness one's team with the help of a native or two, feed the team with their help. Then without even a 'by your leave', take your grub box into the first igloo, where you would be greeted with welcoming smiles. A squaw would immediately put snow on the fire to melt; take your muk-luks from you and see to anything they needed done. Whatever they had was at your disposal even if they were starving and they would sit and watch you eat and never think of asking for anything. If you gave them a little tea or tobacco they were smilingly grateful. *That I call true hospitality.*

The Jew I found was in a really bad way. It was with the greatest difficulty that we got him through the tunnel and into the igloo. Then I found that his face was almost completely frozen—his great nose, both ears, both cheeks and his lips. Kuk-muktik and his squaw worked on him most of the night, with slush-ice, dry snow, and rub, rub, rub, rub. He screamed with pain, but I made them keep at it. I took him into Nome on my sled, where he had both feet amputated. But that man must have been a hoodoo, for I had bad luck the whole time he was with me.

I left Top-kok with him in fine weather, two hours after a terrific wind sprung up. We had three days of this, then once more I ran out of grub and of course, the Jew, poor devil, was useless. Then I hit the tundra; realized that I was off my track and

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

lost. Once again we were without a scrap of food.

"Stay-pee-uck-tuck." Everything gone, all finished.

Now I began to get weak and my legs started to give out on me. I knew Solomon River could not be far away, but I was up on the monotonous tundra and could not make my way to the beach, try as I would. Two of my dogs got bad feet, and these I had to put on the sled with the Jew. The footing on the muskegs was bad, dangerous, and at last I wrenched my left ankle. Two days passed like this. I was in agony and getting weaker and weaker, not a bite to eat and sleeping out.

The Jew whining and snivelling constantly, had taken to chanting some lugubrious Hebrew prayer. It must have been one with nine hundred verses to it. At last I began to get groggy and dizzy. I was afraid to kill a dog and eat him. The team was so weak that I might have had to abandon the Jew had I killed one. Then I struck a deep, wide creek. I knew at last where I was, it was Linda Vista Creek, leading into the lagoon. Down this the team went. Then they started yelping. Tails went up, ears pricked forward. I knew that we were saved. They smelt smoke, they raced like mad and in a short while we were at the cabin of a half breed Russian named Soltofski.

I think that one more day would have finished the Jew and myself. I ate and slept continuously for twenty-four hours.

When at last I reached Nome, I began to make

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

preparations for the expedition which I had had in mind for some long time and which several Nome men were willing to finance. This was to make a trip across the Behring Straits and into Arctic Siberia—the Tchuck-chi Peninsular. Here is what I took with me for a trip into an unknown Arctic country, where I knew that there would not be a single trader's store at which I could replenish my supplies, and where I must religiously avoid any contact with Russian officials. To meet any would mean my not being heard of again. Thank goodness, that except for three at East Cape, there were none closer than a Cossack post on the Lena River, nearly 1,500 miles to the west.

I had two sleds specially made, these were ten feet basket sleds, every joint in them lashed with fine seal-hide lashings. The runners were made of three feet lengths of walrus ivory, three inches wide and one inch thick, these were lashed to the runners by holes drilled through them. I made all the dog-harness myself, fitting each dog with his own and carrying a spare for each. The harnesses and main pull-rope were all fitted with eye-splices and toggles. I took no tents but a good ground sheet, also a three-hole Yukon sheet iron stove, with two lengths of stove-pipe, each three feet long.

My sleeping bags—two—were the same style I always used but these made ample large enough for two men to sleep in—or a man and a dog. I was taking with me a white man and an Eskimo with his squaw.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

The three essentials for Arctic travel come under the headings of *transport*, *clothing* and *food*. I took two teams of fifteen dogs with me, and I do not believe that in all the North there were any teams to touch them. Before starting out, the Eskimo squaw made two sets of moccasins for each dog; her job would be constantly sewing and repairing clothing and gear for us and the dogs.

Each member of the party took two parkas, four pairs of muk-luks, two pairs of trousers—Eskimo women always wore these and so ante-dated the 'bright young people'—one pair of fur and one of either wool or drill, plenty of mitts, two pairs of coast snow-shoes each, snow-goggles—native made of wood with tiny slits to see through—two double-bitted axes with short handles, one rifle—45.70—shot-gun and ammunition. For the squaw a plentiful supply of needles and good stout twine.

Food. Two hundred and fifty pounds of dried salmon, this was an emergency supply of dog food *which could be eaten by us at a pinch*. For ourselves three hundred pounds of flour, three hundred pounds of beans, three hundred pounds of fat bacon—sour belly—tea, matches, candles, canvas wind-brake, two sled covers. For trade, needles, jews harps, some cheap jack-knives, and a supply of small hand mirrors. I was going to live native, travel native, think native, and survive as a native can, does and will in such country.

I had no patent foods to advertise, no patent clothing and so was not taking any unnecessary

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

risks. Poor old Joaquin Miller, the Californian poet, went into the Yukon with a lot of concentrated food-tablets which were guaranteed to keep a man alive on one taken every hour or some such nonsense. I met the old man when he was nearly at the end of his tether and he was mighty glad of a meal of fat bacon and beans.

I had made inquiries for a considerable time of conditions over on the Siberian side. Whalers had been touching there for years as they went up North. Then once or twice miners had dared to cross—and some had got back. There was not the least doubt that the gold belt which ran to the apex of the Seward Peninsular, crossed over the narrow straits and that the country was rich in gold.

Then again there was not a man who had lived in the North around the Behring Straits who had not heard the native rumours of the great treasure of Ghengis Khan, which is undoubtedly buried in those regions. This consists of untold wealth in precious stones, gold and ivory.

The first time I had ever heard tales of this description had been from a Russian at Holy Cross Mission on the Yukon River, for not so many years ago all Alaska was a Russian possession and Sitka was the seat of the Russian Government. After listening to this man, I heard a similar tale from the Russian priest in charge of the Russian Church on the Point near the store of the Alaska Commercial Company, he swore that he knew of a Siberian convict who had located the treasure but been

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

captured and knouted to death because he would not reveal where the treasure was situated

Then I received some confirmation of the story when drinking in the bar of the Alaska Club at Seattle, Washington, this time it was from an old whaler who had dared to make a trip to the New Siberian Islands as long ago as the early eighties. He had made a fortune from the furs and whalebone which he had brought back. He had also got considerable gold in trade, and a large number of Tartar golden ornaments. How did they get up to those parts?

CHAPTER SEVEN

KLINDENBERG THE LONE WOLF OF THE ARCTIC—
CAPTAIN JIM MACKENNA'S TALE OF THE OLGA MUTINY
—NONSENSE WRITTEN ABOUT ESKIMOS BY SHORT
VISITORS TO GREENLAND—MY FIRST VISITS TO THE
TCHUCK-CHIS OF SIBERIA—POLYANDRY—UNBELIEV-
ABLE GOLD—STRANGERS FROM THE INTERIOR—I GO
ON A GREAT CARIBOU HUNT WITH THEM—THE ORGY
WHICH FOLLOWED—AN ESKIMO FREAK—UNIQUE SLEDS
—HOW MADE

SHORTLY before leaving the American side I met Captain Jim MacKenna at the store of the North American Trading and Transportation Co.; I was introduced to him by Sam Heron, the son-in-law of old John Healy, owner and boss of the N.A.T. and T. Co. Cap. Jim MacKenna had been owner of the famous, or infamous *Olga*, the mutiny ship of the Arctic Ocean when she was captured by Klindenberg. I knew Klindenberg well and liked him. His version of the mutiny, and I am convinced the true one, I have told elsewhere. Here is the version I got that day from Jim MacKenna.

I tell this story and the one which follows it by Captain Bob Bartlett, because they will give the reader another vision of Arctic life, one from

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

another angle, and let him understand some of the perils encountered there, apart from that of the climate.

Let me start by saying that in my estimation, and in that of many other old timers of the North, Klindenberg was a great explorer and knew that part of the Arctic as well as a taxi-driver does London, certainly far better than the two explorers who try so hard to belittle him in their books.

This is Jim MacKenna talking.

"I've been trading North since 1885, mostly to the parts to where you're going, Arctic Siberia and along that coast from Wrangel Island to as far as the New Siberian Islands. I started with one small brig and a cargo of hootch, arms and ammunition, and by 1895 I had a fleet of fifteen ships. These were engaged in whaling and trading for furs, whalebone and ivory. Then Uncle Sam sent those damned revenue cutters up here, the *Bear* and the *Corwin*. The bottom dropped out of the whalebone market about the same time when women stopped using the old style corset, and started using these new fangled things. At the same time the cutters stopped me peddling rum. By 1905 I had only two small vessels left, the *Olga* and the *Hansen*.

"In 1905 I had a man as skipper on the *Olga*, who I knew was double-crossing me. Her mate then was 'Wolf' Klindenberg. Klindenberg is a Dane or Swede who came to the country in a whaler as cook's helper. 'Wolf' Klindenberg was known throughout all the North for guts, energy, and for

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

being a real devil if roused. He could handle any ten men and handle them right.

"Now I reckoned that Klindenberg was a better risk as skipper of the *Olga* than the man I had then—that skipper is a dead beat in Nome now. The one fear I had of Klindenberg was that he would clear off with the *Olga* to New Siberia, Franz Joseph Land or even way up north to Prince Patrick Island or Melville Island, all north of 75 (degrees), and quite unknown except to Klindenberg, who knew those parts of the Arctic Ocean as well as a rabbit knows the holes in his warren; certainly far better than any of these paper-advertised explorers do.

"I reckoned to euchre any game of Klindenberg's in that line, by only having supplies on board the *Olga* for a couple of weeks. Well I was the sucker! (Yankee for 'mug'). Klindenberg showed me that I had a lot to learn about him—and the North.

"Not a dashed thing was heard from Klindenberg from the day he sailed until a year afterwards. All kinds of rumours floated down. 'He had cleared off to Arctic Siberia.' 'He'd sailed to Japan and sold the *Olga* here.' Those Japs will buy anything at a price. Others said that he knew of land way up close to the Pole where there was gold, and where foxes could be got by the hundreds for next to nothing. Foxes were high then and fetching wonderful prices.

"I sailed for Herschel Island, at the mouth of the Mackenzie River, in Canada, in the little *Hansen*, and the week after my arrival there, the *Olga*

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

sailed in. She'd no sooner dropped her 'mud-hook', than Klindenberg came ashore and went to the 'Mountie' barracks and told the Inspector there his tale."

It was a tale of bloody murder, mutiny, child-birth while killing was going on and every kind of tragedy the northern seas have ever known. Klindenberg had known of one of the many old whaling ships which have been frozen in the ice in the North, and where what has become of the crew is one of the Arctic's many mysteries. This particular whaler lay in a bay on the north side of Bathurst Island, with all her cargo intact. This was north of seventy-six degrees. He had gone there and loaded the *Olga* with as much cargo as she would carry, then sailed her to the south side of Victoria Island, where he established a large trading post.

He had taken his wife and all his five children with him on the *Olga* to Victoria Island. Whilst away hunting for two weeks on the west side of the island; the engineer of the *Olga* had made a still, distilled hootch, got drunk, and then threatened to murder Mrs. Klindenberg and all her children. He had got every member of the crew drunk, and then had attempted to rape the eldest girl, a youngster of thirteen. Mrs. Klindenberg had been expecting to give birth to a baby at the time; notwithstanding this, she stood the man off with a gun.

When Klindenberg returned his wife told him of all that had occurred, and where the still was hidden. The engineer saw him coming, shot at

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Klindenberg, then as he advanced the engineer fired again and now Klindenberg fired at him from the hip with the Winchester he was carrying. He hit the engineer in the stomach and he died almost immediately. Two other members had died from wounds while Klindenberg was driving them off from the still, which he smashed. After this two other members of the crew had died from exposure.

Jim MacKenna then went on to tell me.

"All this was testified too in ship-shape order, he and all the surviving members of the crew had signed this document, with an added memo that during the trouble with the engineer Mrs. Klindenberg had given birth to a baby boy.

"Well all seemed kinda proper. I let the matter of the *Olga* drop. There did not seem any good stirring up that. Klindenberg turned her over to me in good condition; minus any stores. The day after he did this he sailed away from Herschel Island in a large whaleboat of his own; this he had taken from the deserted whaler. In her he took his wife and kids. That was the 'Wolf' all over; risks never seemed to worry him.

"Think of starting on a voyage in the Arctic Ocean, of several hundred miles in an open boat, and with your wife and kiddies!

"Klindenberg had hardly got round the point of the island before the crew of the *Olga* came to me and asked me to take them before the 'Mountie' Inspector. Here was the version they now gave of the mutiny.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

“ ‘Klindenberg had forced them to sign the other document at the point of his gun.

“ ‘He had killed the engineer in a quarrel, shot him the first time in the stomach, left him in his bunk for three days without attention and then one day had gone in and shot him dead with a bullet in his head.

“ ‘He had shot two members of the crew when they had protested, saying that he did not mind if he shot the lot of them. The two said to have died of exposure had been frozen to death chained up in the peak of the *Olga*.

“ ‘Klindenberg had told the crew that if they dared to breath a word of the matter, except as given out by him, he would kill everyone of them and that if he did not he would see that his native brothers-in-law would.’

“Now the Canadian Police-Inspector got busy. Klindenberg had sailed for Point Barrow in Alaska and from there to Nome. The Canadian Police got him arrested there by the United States Marshall, for his crime had been committed on an United States ship and his victims had been United States citizens. Klindenberg was taken down to San Francisco and there tried by the United States Federal-Court. He was taken south in the United States Revenue Cutter *Bear*. The Federal Court accepted the version given by Klindenberg to the court.” The same which he told me and which I have given in detail elsewhere.

That ended Jim MacKenna’s tale of Klinden-

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

berg, but he also told me what he had heard of the great gold finds being made along the Siberian Arctic shores and up the rivers.

The other story is also of Arctic tragedy. This time one told me by that superb Arctic sailor, Captain Bob Bartlett of the *Karluk*, a brigantine of 250 tons. On her he had a crew of sixteen.

On New Years Day, 1914, the *Karluk* was crushed in the field-ice off Wrangel Island, finally sinking on January 11th, 1914. By the time Captain Bob Bartlett had reached the mainland and got from there to East Cape on the Behring Straits, he had lost seven of his crew and was himself in bad shape; almost completely snowblind and with his feet and legs so badly swollen that he was unable to walk. The hardships they had suffered had been terrible, and yet Captain Bob was an old Arctic explorer, having commanded ships for Stefansson, Parry and for expeditions for the Canadian Government. He gave me a good account of the Tchuck-chis, and told me that they were the means of saving the lives of those who survived of his crew.

Early one morning I sailed out from the mouth of Snake River with my supplies and equipment, and in due course, via the Diomedé Islands, landed considerably north of East Cape and made my first permanent camp at Cape Serdze, living here for nearly two weeks with some Tchuck-chi Eskimos—from now on I shall allude to these people as Tchuck-chis only, but will say here that they were pure Eskimos and spoke a language which differed

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

very little from that of the Alaskan Eskimos, except in some words which I imagined were Bariut Samoyede or some other Siberian native lingo. I did find, however, that these people were considerably more warlike than the Alaskans.

A few nights ago I listened to a broadcast given by a young Varsity student who announced that he had lived for two years amongst the Greenland Eskimos. He said that they assured him they were astonished to hear that white men killed each other. That they never did such things.

They must have been a breed of Eskimos whom such men as Stefansson, Klindenberg, Rasmussen, the Canadian Mounted Police, all old whaling captains and myself have never met. When a man says he knows the Eskimos and has lived with them in Greenland for two years, the authorities I have mentioned will bear me out when I say, that is the equivalent of an Eskimo saying to his village :

“Yes. I know Europe and the white men who live there. I have lived in Ireland for two years.”

The Eskimos proper, extend from the north of Greenland, right across Canada and the lands north of there, across Alaska and from East Cape in Siberia, along the Arctic shores for roughly fifteen hundred miles. In all I have done somewhere in the neighbourhood of twenty thousand miles travelling by dog-team along the Arctic shores, in Alaska and along the Siberian shores of the Arctic Ocean and I can tell of dozens of cases of killings for one cause and another. One of the most recent and bloody, was

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

the murder of two Roman Catholic Fathers by two Eskimos up on the shores of Coronation Gulf. They shot the Fathers in the back merely to get the one shot-gun they possessed.

Before I have ended this book I shall be giving the data of many a cold-blooded killing.

From an old Tchuck-chi at Cape Serdze, I gathered that their tradition was that his race were descended from Eskimos who many long years ago—their nearest definition of time—had come to Siberia from the Alaskan side, from the Diomedes and Lawrence Islands and from as far south as the Aleutian Archipelago.

We were staying in the igloo which was occupied by the head of the community and two of his sons and their families. This old man's name was Anguk-lalik, and he was very proud of the fact that he was the only man in those parts who had ever been known to possess two wives. Women were scarce and valuable. He had secured both these *by killing their husbands*. He had five sons living and his wives had born him seven girl children, all of whom had been killed at birth except two.

These people were a fine, kindly and most hospitable race, but scarcity of food, made for scarcity of women. Females were unable to hunt and provide, so they were only extra mouths to feed in times of starvation—every seventh year.

When at a marriagable age—ten to twelve amongst them—a girl was worth a sled, a dog, perhaps a ky-ak or even half a large seal. She was

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

then her husband's property when he had paid this for her; her very life was his. He was the hunter and provider. She did the work and was always a superb needle-woman. Polyandry existed amongst the Tchuck-chis in every community I visited. This was owing to the great shortage of women. The changing and loaning of wives was always going on, and I was frequently being offered the use of one, without her being in any way consulted in the matter. It always ended in my being good naturedly chaffed on my refusing. If I had accepted and she had demurred, she would have received a sound beating from her husband and been scorned by her sisters.

The shortage of women was the cause of many killings.

The urge for sexual intercourse, combined with the great shortage of women—there were not more than two to every six men—gave rise to much competition for them, and many fights. I found that it was by no means uncommon for this to lead to fights, which only finished when one or the other had been done to death.

We got our first taste of Siberian cold here; the sea had been frozen for a considerable time, but up to now, leaving great leads a mile or so in width, all running due north. One morning, the cold was intense, quite eighty degrees below zero, and I stood on a bluff watching these leads. In them there were always small cakes of ice, the size of moderately large dining-room tables; these would

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

be turning and twisting in the leads as the currents played with them.

As I stood there watching, fascinated, the surface of the sea changed instantly before my eyes. The sea became mushy and dull looking. I saw the pieces of float-ice expand. The mush got thicker and thicker, the pieces of ice got closer together; seeming to get larger and larger as I watched. In almost a few seconds, it seemed to me, the great open leads closed up and became solid ice.

It was unbelievable, wonderful to watch, and even as I moved about to keep my blood circulating the cold grew more severe. In less than ten minutes those open leads were several inches thick with sea-ice. I went back to the igloo and the glass dropped more and more. The cold frightened me. No one dared go out now and the natives themselves feared to go out into the open.

One day we were visited by a dog team and six Eskimos from the interior. Anguk-lakik was with me at the time of their arrival, as were Stephan and his wife. We were standing on a slight knoll by the igloos, looking from the sea and across the tundra plain. We saw them in the distance. The strangers stopped their dogs, and then laid on the snow some spears and bows and arrows which they were carrying. Three of them came towards us and the other three stayed with the dogs; they had all they could do to prevent them rushing to attack the village dogs.

The tallest of the three gave us to understand

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

that his name was Sinik-assuk. Soon we were surrounded by all the village, then the three strangers raised their hands above their heads, assuring us that they came as friends. On this Anguk-lalik touched each man on the shoulder. When this had been done, Sinik-assuk called to the men with the team to approach, at the same time some of the Tchuck-chis went towards them to assist and prevent our dogs from fighting with theirs. Then the six strangers were taken into igloos, women were lent to them, and while these prepared a meal, matters were discussed.

These natives were deer hunting, Tchuck-chis who came from a considerable distance in the interior. They wanted blubber and seal hides and had come to tell us of a great herd of deer which was in their district and to invite our people to the slaughter in exchange for blubber and other things which they needed, sealskins being the main requirement. They had brought a sled-load of deer meat with them and that night there was a great feast. After this was over, there was little sleep in our igloo, as Anguk-lalik and another in the igloo had loaned their wives to two of the newcomers. But then in the North, one gets used to taking sleep by snatches as one can and as often as possible. The same applies to eating in an igloo; it is usually done as the fancy takes them, natives seldom have fixed hours for this.

Four days after this we were camping with Sinik-assuk and his people. Though they lived on

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

deer meat principally, their methods and the stuff which they ate was in no way better than that of the seashore Tchuck-chis. They usually started their meals with copious drinks of caribou blood, which had been thawed out from solid frozen blocks; this was followed by half putrid caribou meat and invariably—at least as long as they were procurable—by a desert of large, black and frozen maggots got from the meat during the summer.

The day after our arrival at their village, we were all astir early for the great hunt. First a string of women and children were posted behind a long line of cairns, three feet high, which extended for quite three miles to the foot of a great bluff. At intervals there would be cairns without anyone behind them, these would have large tufts of waving grass planted on them. The women and children were to stand behind their cairns until the caribou were driven towards them, when they would start shouting and waving bunches of grass, this would make the herd stampede into a small valley near the bluff which ended in a cul-de-sac.

I was posted with Sinik-assuk and suddenly my eyes became glued to a spot, an opening in the low hills opposite where we stood, this spot appeared to be a darker colour than the surrounding snow on the low hills and the plain. Caribou! Hundreds of them! Then as they came on I thought of thousands! Just such herds as those which used to cross at Caribou Crossing on the Yukon River not so many years ago, when for three, four and five days,

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

they would cross in herds of from twenty to fifty thousand.

Standing beside me were Sinik-assuk and Anguk-lalik. The former now took command. Leaving one of his men on the slight hill on which we stood, and sending two others back to the line of cairns with some message, he shaped a course, telling us to follow, that would place us across the opening of the cul-de-sac after the herd had been driven in.

The herd sighted us, but did not stampede as I had expected that they would do. They swerved away towards the valley opening. One or two majestic bucks, with fine spread of antlers, stood and looked us over carefully, one was the grandest animal of his kind I have ever seen. They were about three hundred yards from our party at this time.

At the end of half an hour, when the first part of the herd, several hundred strong, had entered the wide mouth of the valley, Sinik-assuk gave a sharp order and we all headed for the opening as fast as we could, yelling like people possessed of a hundred shaman's devils.

This split the first half—the advance guard of the herd—from the main body, which turned back now and stampeded in the direction from which it had come. I estimated that quite five hundred had been driven into that small valley where they were now milling like range cattle in a large corral.

We advanced to the kill with our bows and arrows, lances and harpoons. I had not allowed any

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

of our ammunition to be wasted on this hunt. I knew that there would be a great kill without wasting our priceless cartridges. The herd rapidly became more restless, then panic-stricken; milling about and charging here and there aimlessly, only to be met on every side by yelling, gesticulating, killing Tchuck-chis.

The slaughter went on at a great pace. Arrows rained on the maddened animals. Other Tchuck-chis plied their harpoons and lances—jabbing, thrusting, stabbing, the frenzied animals, and always the aim was for the throat. This must have gone on for more than an hour, until finally the mass of fear-crazed brutes, driven mad by the shouting and the smell of blood everywhere, broke through the line of natives at the opening of the valley and stampeded back to the distant hills from which they had come.

Two hundred and eight deer were killed, but I think that quite a hundred wounded got away. Most of these Sinik-assuk said, would be trailed by other Tchuck-chis and killed, but that many would be eaten by the wolves which always follow on the heels of great herds to pull down any weak animals or fawns that stray.

That night there was a regular orgy of eating. I have never seen any natives, even in Africa, stuff away the same amount of meat. The only part of the feast which I thoroughly enjoyed were the boiled tongues, these were delicious. After the feast there was much dancing, singing, beating of drums

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

and boasting by hunters of their deeds. Exactly as Matabele or Zulus did in the old days after a successful raid or 'stamping out'.

The next day I received a bad jar to my nerves. Stephan came to me and said: "Sinik-assuk say that we not be allowed to go away. He think that you great Angarkut—shaman."

I did not believe him. Told him not to be a fool and not to bother his head.

The weather had been ideal the day of the great hunt, cold, with the glass around twenty below zero, but with a brilliant sun. The night of the great feast and celebration, banks of clouds had come up and now it began to snow heavily. Then Stephan came to me with Anguk-lalik, and he assured me that what Stephan had said was true.

I said to Stephan: "Slip away at once. Tell the white man what you have told me. Then with him and your wife harness our teams. Anguk-lalik will remain here with his people so that they will not become suspicious. Then we will slip away. I want to avoid any killing. It might set the whole country against us."

He went off to do as I had told him. Then more and more of the natives went to their largest igloo for another feast and dance; while Anguk-lalik edged towards a snow igloo which had been erected by his own people.

I was just at the point of congratulating myself that the movements of my partner and Stephan had been unobserved, when I was dismayed to see a

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

large party of the natives making towards where my teams stood. Several of them carried their bows and arrows; others had lances with long copper heads attached, lashed on to the eight foot shafts by fine seal-hide thongs.

At that moment a shout came to them, telling them that the great antler dance was starting. Then another aid came to me. This was the weather. It had been snowing heavily but this had ceased and now a north-east wind began blowing and fog, in thin detached clouds, soon obscured everything, blotting out the igloos and the teams.

In ones and twos the natives sought the large igloos from which there now came the rhythmical boom, boom, boom of seal-hide drums; these were large hoops, three feet in diameter with thin seal-skin stretched across them.

The fog increased in denseness until the visibility was not more than two yards. Making my way to where the teams should be, I came across Stephan's wife who was looking for me. I followed her and reached the sleds just as Stephan and my partner had finished lashing the sled-coverings.

In a few seconds we were on the move, and heading back in the direction of Anguk-lalik's village, guided by one of his young men. After an hours travelling, the wind sprang up again and cleared the fog away. I felt sure that we were headed in the wrong direction, at least we were according to my compass, but when I spoke to Stephan and the young Tchuck-chi, they explained that they were

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

taking a different course to avoid any possibility of pursuit.

That night we camped at the edge of a small lake which was surrounded by a dense growth of dwarf willows; Stephan and his wife and the young Tchuck-chi soon had a splendid snow igloo made. That night we were joined by a solitary native from the Koliuchin Bay district. At first I took this stranger for a woman, but Stephan and the Tchuck-chi assured me that it was a man who had made himself into a woman and wore a woman's parkas and trousers, talked like a woman and would be accepted by the other women as one of themselves. It was a sheer case of homo-sexuality, brought about partly by naturally perverted ideas and partly by the shortage of women. This native, Nat-ku-sik told us a tale that night, which I had heard before in the Colville Mountain district of Alaska, this was of the survival of the Mammoth.

He, or she, spoke of an animal which he called the Im-ma-mait, and went on to say that this great and mysterious animal lived in a region far to the south of Koliuchin Bay, where the land was all swamp and tundra surrounded by high mountains. The name he used for this animal, is almost the same as that which is used for it by the Innuits and Eskimos of Alaska. These call it the In-nait.

Nat-ku-sik said that this animal was tremendously powerful and dangerous. He claimed that twice his people had hunted one, but that on both occasions several of the party had been killed by it.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Though this might all have been sheer imagination, his description of the animal, its large curved tusks, its huge trunk, long dark brown hair and sail-like ears were exact in every detail with our conception of such an animal, and the fact remains that several well preserved mammoth remains have been found in Siberia. I, myself, have crossed tundra plains which were plentifully sprinkled with their bones, huge teeth and some of their tusks. The old headman at Kooick, on Norton Bay, used to have two tusks ten feet long around the outside curve.

The following day I happened to notice Nat-kusik's sled and was puzzled to know what kind of wood it was made from. Stephan asked him, then he told us what it was and how it was made. Wood, he said, was scarce where he came from and so they made many of their sleds from hides. This is how it was done.

A walrus hide was soaked thoroughly in fresh water. Then it was folded into the required length and width. It was next pounded flat, by being beaten with clubs. More fresh water was then poured on it and it was then laid on an even, smooth surface of snow where it would freeze. With the terrific Siberian cold, the temperature often below minus sixty, these hides were frozen as solid as a plank of old oak. This was done with two hides for each sled. Out of one hide, with his axe or adze, the native then cut a plank for the bottom of the sled. From the other he cut two sled runners

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

just as he would have done from a tree plank. In these he notched places for the cross-pieces, drilled holes for the lashings and finally turned out a sled much like a Yukon sled. This was then turned over and water poured on each runner until there was a layer of ice three to four inches thick. As soon as warm weather came, of course the sled was useless, but this will show how extremely ingenious the natives in the Arctic are, and how they adapt themselves to conditions.

CHAPTER EIGHT

UNIQUE STONE LAMPS AND HEATERS—BUILDING SNOW IGLOOS QUICKLY: HOW IT IS DONE—ASTOUNDING FEATS BY SHAMANS—CAUGHT IN A NORTHER—OUR IGLOO NEARLY BLOWN AWAY—A TERRIFIC FIGHT OVER WOMEN—SIX KILLED—A FEW NECESSARY FACTS ABOUT SIBERIA NOT GENERALLY KNOWN—SOME REPULSIVE PEOPLE I MEET NEAR KOLUYCHIN BAY—MORE STRANGE DWELLINGS

THE following night we camped in an old snow igloo, and against the wishes of Stephan, his wife and the young Tchuck-chi, I decided to sleep in it in order to save the trouble of building one. We had had a long hard day and were all pretty well exhausted. I was nearly the cause of the whole party being killed that night. Now a newly-built snow-igloo is beautifully warm, but an old one is no longer a snow igloo but an ice one. This igloo which we found had been used for so long a period that its walls were solid, glistening ice. It had a good bed-platform and as the glass was low that night and I wanted to keep the igloo warm, I closed up the tunnel tightly and never looked to see if the roof-vent was clear of snow. I slept on the platform that night and woke up choking, to find Stephan

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

and his wife doing the same; they had slept on the floor, close to the stove. They were almost gone and I thought that the young Tchuck-chi was dead.

I realized at once what the trouble was. The Yukon stove had generated a gas. My partner and I battered a way through the ice-snow walls and crawled out, followed by Stephan, then after getting a few breaths of air, we went back again and hauled out Stephan's wife and the native.

Luckily it was a beautiful night, and not much more than zero. It was two hours, however, before we had completely recovered, but for some hours after this I continued to have dizzy attacks.

One thing that struck me about the Tchuck-chis, was the great number of stone lamps, heaters and basins which they all possessed, and how excellently they were made. I gathered that there was one particular part of the country to which the natives from hundreds of miles around went to get the particular stone of which these were made. Here there were many quarries from which people for centuries had dug the soapstone called by them *Tunir-ik-tak*. There is no doubt that a large amount of this stone found its way in former days by trade and barter to Alaska.

At length I decided to make a start for Koliuchin Bay and to spend the winter there, or go on by a large oomiak. I left Anguk-lalik and his village with my two sleds and one belonging to two of his sons who accompanied me to the next Tchuck-chi village. This sled of theirs was sixteen feet long, by

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

four feet wide and twelve inches above its runners. It had a light but crude framework, and its runners were six inches wide; these being coated with a mixture of moss and ice. A mixture of moss cut up fine and mixed in slush-snow was put on the runners and allowed to freeze. This was done until there was a layer of three inches frozen on the runners. Then water was poured on until there was a two inch layer of ice on this. These made ideal runners, except when going over bare tundra or gravel bars, when they are liable to get stripped quickly. This ice surface on the runners reduces all friction and allows a greater load per dog to be carried. The ice surface on the runners does not cling to ice or snow, as steel and even ivory will do. They used an extra large team of dogs for their sled, but these were harnessed fan-fashion, which does not enable the most to be got out of the dogs, and means loss of time through their constantly entangling their harness.

These two sons of Angik-lalik came with us as far as Ididlija and here we were storm-bound for three days. We made a snow igloo at the base of a high granite cliff in a nicely sheltered cove. Here we found ideal snow drifts for the purpose, firmly compressed and with a good frozen surface.

I will here explain the method of making a snow igloo, and show how rapidly and with what ease this is done by the natives. Incidentally they are never made of ice. The natives in building these always work in pairs, much as a bricklayer and his

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

mate work on a house. The only tool used by them is a snow-knife, This has a blade of eighteen inches with a long handle. One man will cut the blocks of snow from the drift, handing them to the man doing the building. All being done with amazing speed and precision. As the walls rose the squaw kept laying plenty of soft snow on each line of snow-bricks, much as a bricklayer lays on his cement; this chaulks up any chinks or crevices. In less than an hour, with our clumsy assistance, they had built an igloo ready for occupation, and while they added the finishing touches to the interior, we got the Yukon stove inside and lighted, and the two Tchuck-chis got their blubber lamps going. That night the eldest son of Anguk-lalik, whose name was Pisug-kaitsiak, or the wanderer, told us some of the lore of the Tchuck-chi shamans or magicians.

His father's brother (uncle) was one he said. According to Pisug-kaitsiak, with the Tchuck-chis both men and women could become Angarkuts, but the female Angarkuts, were not able to do much evil as the spirits would not answer them as easily. A male Angarkut was able to kill a man by calling on a Tupliakik or the spirit of a malicious walrus or giant seal. This Tupliakik when called on and obedient to the wishes of the Angarkut would wait until the man whom the Angarkut wanted killed, went out on the sea in his ky-ak and then attack the ky-ak from the stern with its tusks and never allow itself to be harpooned.

He told us that one man in their village once

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

killed a seal Tupilakik. He only found this out when cutting the seal open. From that moment he wasted away.

Then it became known that it was his uncle, the Angarkut who had made this Tupliakik. He had done this with the bones of dead seals and dead men, cementing them together with a mixture of blood and then conjuring them to life.

Here I must anticipate somewhat. During fifty years of travel in the bush and on the veldt, in Central Africa, Central America and from British Columbia to the Arctic tundras I have run across mysteries strange—and often evil. Mysteries which I have never been able to understand. The old witch-doctors of the Fingoes, Zulus and Matabele did things which no white man could ever explain. *Some of the shamans* can accomplish marvels.

Tourists who have to get back to their liners in time for dinner (in tails) see only the thin veneer laid on uncivilized lands by the hand of civilized man—the black, yellow or brown man decked out in the cast-off clothes of the white. But this is not the world seen by the hunter, trader *and the hater of civilization*—such as myself.

Such men as these know that fifty—even twenty miles from the steamer, railhead or river boat, are lands of mystery, evil rites, devil worship and where black magic exists to-day.

Pisug-kaitsiak went on to assure us that though his uncle could undoubtedly kill—with the assistance of the Tupliakik; on the other hand he could

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

and did bring people back to life who had died. This, however, he could only do if he had been taken to the dead body within twenty-four hours of the death.

I have seen quite a lot of what the Angarkuts can do. Most of it is mumbo-jumbo which the man himself sincerely believes in. But some of them do the most astonishing things and I once saw—or believe I did—this raising of the dead. Now among all the Eskimos, the profession of the Angarkut is highly revered—dying out now except in Siberia—and well rewarded. There is no heredity attached to it. Each one serves a hard apprenticeship. Learns certain rites and an astounding amount of self control. Also the power to throw themselves into trances of great length. To give them their due, they go through a most severe training and certainly some of them acquire some uncanny gifts.

Several months after this talk of Pisug-kaitsiak's I was staying in the summer igloo of some Tchuckchi natives on the shores of the Arctic Ocean opposite Wrangel Island. Here there was a little child—a girl of about five or seven—who had a severe attack of mumps and—as so many of the natives do—she had caught a severe chill and was dying. One night she was obviously very bad and died in the early hours of the morning. Her mother seemed devoted to her, as did all the others in the igloo. It struck me as strange that she had been allowed to live at all, being a female child. When

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

there was no longer any doubt that she was dead, her mother hitched up two dogs to a sled and went for an Angarkut who lived not many miles away. She arrived back with the man who was noted for hundreds of miles round for his uncanny powers of evil and good.

The parents and the people in the igloo made him many—for them—gifts of great value. Dogs, furs and such like things. *This was their fee to him to bring the child back to life.*

I had looked at the little thing and put my hand on her heart. I was convinced she was dead.

That Angarkut made every person leave the igloo, myself included. Then closed up the roof vent and the two tunnel entrances. Soon after we could hear him chanting and yelling like a madman possessed of a hundred devils. This lasted for a considerable time, say an hour, then there was not a sound to be heard for ten minutes or more. Suddenly, from the entrance of the igloo tunnel, out crawled the Angarkut, *and he was followed by the child.* He took her up to her parents, said something to them and then we all returned to the igloo. The child was certainly very weak all the remainder of that day, but the day following she seemed to be as well as ever she had been.

When the magician of any community becomes possessed of a spirit, he will stand groaning, as if he were in great pain, beads of perspiration will appear on his forehead and face; next he will begin to shake and tremble violently from head to foot, then

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

suddenly he will throw himself on the floor of the igloo or to the ground, and start to sing the sacred spirit song. Gradually he works himself into a frenzy, during which time he keeps his eyes tightly closed, with an expression of the greatest agony on his face.

To-day their hold over the people, except in Siberia, is almost extinct. This has come about through the many good schools opened up by the United States Board of Education and through the fact that many of the well-to-do Eskimos in Alaska have sent their children out to the States to school. These Eskimos no longer make appeals to the supernatural and the shamans are having a hard time, being forced to hunt or starve.

When the storm had died down, we once more started to try and make Koliuchin Bay, where I knew that there was a large village. We got away in a snow smother, with the glass at five below zero, but that night were again forced to make a snow igloo and just managed to get it finished as the gale rose to a regular norther.

This kept us up half the night strengthening the walls. Several times I thought it would blow the igloo into a million particles of snow. At times it seemed as if the whole of the igloo would shiver and then I dreaded that the terrific wind would find some crevice and break through. Once that happened, it would soon have taken the whole thing into the air.

To avoid such a disaster, we constantly watched

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

the walls for any crevices and stuffed these up with packed snow. As if by magic I suddenly heard absolute stillness. Then after this had lasted a few minutes I went out through what was left of the tunnel. I could not resist a cry of joy and amazement. The air was perfectly still. There was not a breath of wind, and there was a glorious coloured aurora-borealis overhead. And in the stillness of the Arctic night I could hear the gentle swishing noise an aurora makes.

The next night we spent at the house-igloo of a quarter breed—a mixture of Russian, Bariut and Tchuck-chi whose name was Takovich. He had a perfectly delightful home—for the Arctic. Scrupulously clean, a neat little Tchuck-chi wife and six fine sons. From this man I heard details of rich gold which had been found in the country to the south of Koliuchin Bay and all along from there to the Lena River and south-east as far as Anadyr River. He showed me some fine nuggets of dark gold, almost as dark as dirty brass, and much like the gold found in Anvil Creek, Nome City. Also some exceptionally fine quartz containing large pieces of free-milling gold and obviously outcroppings.

After leaving his hospitable residence we had rough going in many places, as we were forced to travel close under some mighty granite cliffs—it was either that or make a long and hard portage over them. It became excessively warm about mid-day, with the temperature well above zero. The

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

strong rays of the brilliant sun hitting right on the face of the cliffs, made travel not only bad but exceedingly dangerous. The sun getting so strong that it was able to thaw out ice holding great boulders on the face of the cliffs; these came crashing down without the slightest warning. As the water was deep right up to the cliffs, the drift ice came in right up to them, was crushed and pressed by the great fields outside, and made hummocks and ridges which kept our rate of travel down to as little as a mile an hour for many miles.

My next camp with Tchuck-chis was with a community of eighteen people. Here a few days before we arrived there had been a fight over women in which six natives had been killed—one third of the community. Of the original population of eighteen, four had been women. Of these women, two men had tried to keep two of them for their wives, refusing the custom of polyandry, against all traditions of these people. That meant that there were only two women for the remaining twelve men. One night two men attempted to steal one of the monogamous wives. The husband resisted and was assisted by the other man owning one wife. Knives, spears and harpoons were next brought into play, until the whole community was mixed in one great *mêlée*. This ended with six deaths, one of these being a monogamous wife. Every one of the survivors was wounded.

From this part of the Tchuck-chi Peninsular, I began to notice a strain of white blood in the

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

natives. I do not mean that they were half or even quarter breeds. It was that there showed in them a strain of another race. I came across men with hair which was not black, hair of deep brown and even with an auburn tinge. Distinctly not hair of the black wiry Mongolian type always found amongst the Japanese, Chinese, Eskimos and all Indian tribes. Many of the people I found had Aryan shaped eyes, and of hazel or blue in colour. As I proceeded farther west along the coast, I noticed this more and more, and put it down to the fact that the early discoveries of this part of Siberia were made by bands of Cossacks.

It now becomes necessary for me to give a few historical facts about Siberia and a few statistics. I will make these as brief as I possibly can, but I hope that they will be found interesting and also illuminating.

First, during all my travels in Siberia I was only in one small part of it, a part about the present size of Germany. For, in all Europe—excluding Russia—there are 1,700,000 square miles of land, add to this total the territory of all the United States and Alaska, another 3,500,000 square miles and you have a grand total of 5,200,000 square miles. *Siberia is larger than this by 350,000 square miles and the largest part of this vast country is in the same latitude as New York, London, Spain and the French Riviera, growing cotton, tobacco and with splendid vineyards and stupendous wheat lands.*

In Arctic Siberia you have a frostbound waste

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

where only Arctic mosses and lichens grow and inhabited by semi-nomadic tribes such as the Bariuts, Samoyedes and the Tchuck-chis. These wastes are covered with the remains of the sabre-toothed tiger and the mighty mammoth. With the exception of one, every river in Siberia flows north into the Arctic Ocean. The mighty Lena River has a navigable basin of more than 6,900 miles, while the Ob River extends from the Arctic Ocean to Lake Baikal.

Siberia ranks first in the production of platinum, a close second—she will soon be first—in the production of gold, second in asbestos, manganese, and chrome ore. I shall have more to say about gold later.

Discoverers of Siberia. The early explorers and discoverers of Siberia were Cossacks, and it is to these that the natives with whom I was now staying owed their different appearance, and admixture of blood. The first known conqueror, explorer and settler in Siberia was Yermak, a Don Cossack and pirate on the Volga River. In the year 1580 Yermak wintered with a Cossack band at Tobolsk Siberia, and in 1584 when he met his death by drowning in the Irtish River, he governed a great kingdom of his own which he had carved out of Tartary territory.

In real truth, to read of the conquests and discoveries of Siberia is to read as fascinating a romance and tale of high adventure as that of Cortes and Mexico or Pizarro and Peru. Yermak smashed the

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

mighty Tartar Empire. A small body of his Cossacks would build an ostrog—fort—and from this would dominate an enormous expanse of country. But they soon found that there was less resistance to the north, than there was to the south, hence their migrations were always north by east.

Furs were to the Cossacks what gold was to Cortes and what diamonds were to the settlers in South Africa in the later part of the last century; and furs were to be secured in unlimited quantities in the sparsely, inhabited tundras and forests of the far north.

Again, popular ideas to the contrary, the Cossacks were natural born sailors first, horsemen by training. Their method being to sail down any river from source to mouth, and as already noted, all Siberian rivers flowed north.

Berezov was founded in 1593. Yeniseik in 1616, and during the years 1620-23 the Tungus were finally subdued after many bloody massacres. Finding that the Lena River did not connect with any to the east by easy portages, the great Cossack leader Rose, sailed to its mouth with a large body of Cossacks in 1638, and travelled east along the shores of Arctic Siberia, reaching Indigirka in 1639. He and his men endured the most terrible hardships and treated the natives with unparalleled severity, he states, "every Cossack had from three to five wives . . . we killed off their men."

From 1644 to 1648 the Cossack leader, Dezhnev,

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

the greatest explorer of them all, after whom the Russians have named East Cape, Cape Dezhneva, made his marvellous journey right round the coast of the Tchuck-chi Peninsular to the mouth of the Anadyr River, passing through the Behring Straits and Behring Sea eighty years before Behring himself. At Anadyr he was joined by another band of his men who came by the way of Kolina and over the great watershed. In 1647 the Okhotsk ostrog (fort) was built after fierce and prolonged fighting with the Bariuts.

During the years 1697-1700 there were several mutinies among the Cossacks and hundreds deserted, went to the North and there settled and lived with the natives. In the years 1649-54 a great Siberian explorer-merchant named Kharbarov, sailed down the Amur, opened a series of trading posts and fought the Chinese Imperial Troops, but it was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the Russian Government sent an expedition to the Tchuck-chi Peninsular to subdue the natives there, but they were quite unsuccessful.

This very abbreviated history of the opening of Arctic Eastern-Siberia will show how the Cossack strain got mixed with the Tchuck-chis.

I finally reached a large village which consisted of twenty-two igloos and which had a population of one hundred and twenty-eight people; men, women and children. Their only weapons were bows, arrows and spears. There was not even an old musket among them, though they knew of such.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

However, they would gladly give furs in trade for old guns, rifles and shot-guns for the steel in them. The barrels of such as these they made into knives, harpoons, and lance-heads. These people were particularly rich in copper, most of their weapons having heads which they had hammered out from copper nuggets. They also had a considerable quantity of gold in nuggets and wore gold labrets—studs—in their lips and gold ear studs. These people showed a distinct Aryan strain—they would have gladdened the heart of Hitler. Many of the men were of a distinctly handsome type. They had broad foreheads, eyes set wide apart, and non-mongolian, well shaped aquiline noses, firm well shaped mouths and chins, but had slightly prominent cheek bones.

Their mouths were not over prominent, their lips being well shaped and not too thick. They had white and well-shaped teeth—the men. Their skins had a slight copperish tinge, but owing to the presence of a constant coat of dirt, I could not make sure of the real colour. Certainly the cheeks of many of the children were ruddy. Both men and women had luxuriant heads of hair, ranging from the darkest chestnut to raven black.

The cheeks of even old men were completely bare of any hair; the moustache being slight, with two to three inches of a straggly beard hanging from the very apex of the chin. The tallest man I measured was five feet nine inches. The men averaging five feet four inches. The tallest woman was four feet

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

eleven inches, the average height being about four feet four inches.

These people were the first Eskimos I met who had a recognized headman, though he would hardly have been called a chief. Certainly he had not the power of life and death such as the usual tribal chief possesses. These people were easily the filthiest of all the people I came across either in the Tchuck-chi Peninsular or in all Alaska. They were supremely filthy; but infinitely kind, friendly and marvellously honest. One thing was certain about them, that is, from the day they were born to the day they died, their bodies were never touched with water, or any other cleansing matter. The consequence was that men, women, children and igloos, swarmed with vermin; and people and igloos possessed a stench impossible to describe.

Every evening, as one might say in our homes after dinner: "Let's have a few rounds of bridge," these people would finish their last meal, then sit around in a circle and removing the skin undergarment, men and women, would start to de-louse each other of some of the thousands they carried. The next stage would be to put the top garment on again, remove their fur trousers and work on each other in turn. Then the women would work on the heads of the men first and then on those of their sisters. They were as quick as monkeys. They would take their long skinning knives, and pass them under the long hair of the person they were working on, so that the back of the knife pressed

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

firmly and flat against the head, and would with a lightning use of their thumb nail kill hundreds of the teeming insect life which found home, feeding and breeding grounds there.

Up to now the preparation I carried with me combined with untiring vigilance had kept me fairly free from such vermin, but now I was soon swarming with the same minute insect organisms.

These people were great deer hunters and owned a considerable number of reindeer, yet owing to the cold and the consequent craving for fat, their greatest luxury was an unlimited amount of blubber. They would eat all parts of a deer with the greatest gusto, and with equal voracity, and drink the blood by the quart. On very rare occasions they would slightly boil the meat, but there was no doubt that they considered this a waste of fuel and that they preferred the meat raw. Even after eating some cooked meat they would finish up with some raw as dessert. Brain, heart, entrails were all the same to them, they showed no preference.

Their methods of eating were simplicity itself. Grabbing a huge chunk of meat they would thrust as much as possible in their mouths, cut off the piece outside, and then chew it for a short time before gulping it down. When the chief had eaten as much as his stomach would hold—and this was more than any two white men could have consumed—he would lay on the floor of the igloo with his arms wide apart and his wife would then stuff his mouth with small pieces of blubber, which he would

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

swallow as fast as he could. It looked like a French woman stuffing a goose. Two pounds of blubber was a small allowance for him, then he would appear to be surfeited for the time being.

It was with these people that I first met some Samoyedes with their dogs. Many say that the Samoyede dog is superior to the malamute, I do not agree with this. They have magnificent coats but their tempers and savagery are much worse than either the husky or the malamute.

Polyandry was general among this large community and the cause of many killings. In fact during my stay with them I met many men who boasted of the fact that they had killed other men of smaller communities several days journey away; and this solely to obtain a woman.

I stayed with these people five days, in fact until three strangers arrived from the western side of Koliuchin Bay, the part to which I wanted to go and when after their stay they started back I decided to go with them. After two days travelling on ideal ice, and with a glorious sun shining the whole of each day, we arrived at their village on the west side of Koliuchin Bay. This was built on a high bank at the mouth of a small river. There were nine permanent igloos here. These showed the first evidence of Tartar influence. They were permanent houses and yet not built of wood. They were set on the very point of the promontory formed by one bank of the small river and the sea, and were made of the largest ribs of whales. These

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

were erected in a dome-shaped formation, and then covered on the outside with the hides of whales, or large seals. The insides were covered with tightly fitted and sewn deer skins with the fur on the inside.

These dome-shaped dwellings had an opening on the south side as distinct from the usual tunnel approach of the igloo. This opening, however, was a double one. On the outside of the dwelling there was a reindeer-curtain which was fastened with thongs, on undoing this there was a hall of skins of about three feet, then another double-curtain, one side fastened on the outside, the other on the inside; so that in all there were three skin-curtains. In the roof was a large vent to allow some of the smoke and some of the stench to escape.

They called these dwellings 'shuums', and in the house in which I stayed, three families lived, and each of these occupied a kind of tented alcove on a raised platform, this was two feet from the floor. In each of these alcoves a stone lamp burned night and day. Wolves were very prevalent and they had adopted a peculiarly cunning method of killing these pests. Their pelts were valuable for the long neck ruff which trimmed the hoods of their parkas. The natives took thin pieces of whalebone four inches long and sharpened each end to a point. They doubled these in the middle and bound the sharpened ends together with extra fine pieces of gut. Just sufficient to hold them. This was then rolled up in a large piece of blubber, but not so large that the wolf could not swallow it. These pieces would

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

be thrown out on the plain, the wolf would scent them, rush at them and bolt them ravenously; soon the stomach would digest the blubber and the gut round the whalebone, this would spring apart and pierce the animal's stomach or intestines and he would die.

I learnt from these people that on the far side—north—of Koliuchin Island there was a ship which was frozen in the ice in a small bay. It had been there for two winters, but they were frightened to go and visit it as their Angarkut had warned them that there were many evil spirits on it. They had, so they said, many times seen giants in white moving about the vessel.

Said Nat-kuk-suk, who had been the first to discover it:

“A great fish, as large as the largest oomiak hung by ropes on one side of it. I thought that it was the greatest fish I had ever seen. I cut the ropes holding it with my longest lance. One end crashed on the ice. Then I saw that it was hollow, and that it was a large oomiak made of wood (evidently a whale-boat). I climbed on the great oomiak. But I became afraid when I heard noises below me. I have never been back.”

I was determined that as soon as I could do so I would make a trip to this ship and find out who and what she was. After two days of a very cold spell, I started across the ice-field to Koliuchin Island accompanied by Nat-kuk-suk and his wife's brother. We reached the island easily, the ice

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

between it and the shore being absolutely ideal for fast travel, but on the north side, were immense masses of ice which had evidently drifted in from the Polar North, either from the direction of Wrangel Island or the New Siberian Island where the great bergs break away eventually from the Polar Glaciers, with a noise louder than the heaviest peals of thunder; leaving behind them miles and miles of similar ice mountains from which they have detached themselves.

CHAPTER NINE

THE DESERTED SHIP—A SHAMAN FROM THE YUKON—
GOLD, MINERAL WEALTH OF SIBERIA—FURS AND TIMBER—
WERE WOLVES AND SPIRITS—INTER-MARRIAGE

WE came to an ice ridge which must have been fully one hundred feet high, it consisted of huge floes piled one upon the other by the ice pressure, and was almost like an ice *chevaux-de-frise*. To find a way through for the sled, I climbed to the top of it, and there in the distance saw a small brig imbedded in the ice of the bay.

Upon the surface of the surrounding ice, the black hull of the little vessel stood out in startling relief against the blinding white of the snow, and the glittering of the several small icebergs at the brig's back. But the deck, masts, yards and every rope of the rigging were thickly encrusted with snow and ice. This glittered in the sun, making the vessel look like one of the toy, crystal-ships sold at Christmas time for children.

The brig had no sails hoisted, and no flag flying. She looked to me like one of the many adventurous little vessels which sail out from the Northern Pacific ports every year, into the far north and the Arctic Ocean, in search of trade and treasure—

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

gold, furs, ivory and many other kinds of treasure-trove to be found there—and death.

After endless trouble and almost breaking the struts on the sled, we got it over the barrier, but the natives were plainly frightened. They kept repeating that there were spirits on the ship which it would be dangerous to disturb.

Suddenly my partner called to me: "Look aft! there by the mast. I'm sure that I can see a man in white standing there. He's just gone down that aft companion-way."

I had certainly seen something move, but I did not think that it was a man, however, the two natives and Stephan agreed with my partner.

We again started towards the brig, and as we got to the top of a smaller ridge, which sloped down to the ship in a long, easy decline, I saw an immense white bear appear out of the aft companion-way.

Three native bear-hunting dogs which we had brought with us started barking furiously, but made no attempt to get aboard the brig. My partner and I, accompanied by Stephan, climbed aboard on one side while the two natives did the same on the far side. When I gained the deck of the vessel, a terrible sight met my gaze. Seven men—I should say seven skeletons—in ragged garments, fit only for the temperate zone, were laying on the deck. As I looked at them, the dogs once more broke out into furious barking, and I turned in time to see the head of a polar bear appear at the forrard hatchway, his mouth open wide and threatening, red-eyes aflame

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

with murderous rage and looking as furious as he could.

My partner immediately fired at the beast, but his bullet only grazed its head; at once it rose on its hind legs and advanced rapidly towards him. Then Nat-kuk-suk, coming from behind the beast, charged it with his bear-lance, plunging it into its side, where it jammed and he was unable to withdraw it. The other native rushed at the bear with a large copper-axe in his hands. Lifting this high above his head he gave the bear a terrific blow at the side of its neck, just where the neck joins the head, burying the axe almost to the head and cutting through the bear's spine. The huge beast fell on its side and the two natives soon finished it off.

On investigation we found that there was not a scrap of food left aboard the brig. In the main cabin there was a mixed up pile of men's bones, but many of these had been gnawed by bears, however, there were eight skulls so I presumed that there had been that number of men. In a small cabin I found two more bodies, these had plainly died from scurvy, though they were terribly emaciated. From this I judged that most of the crew must have died from the same complaint.

In the little cabin where we found the two dead seamen, was a letter which was dated forty-three years previously, written by the mate of the brig. This said that the brig had been caught in the ice in the Polar Seas to the north of Nova Zembla, after leaving Archangel. They had been driven out of

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

their course by a bad storm. It went on to say that they had been in the ice for two years and had drifted almost up to the North Pole. All their provisions had been consumed and many of the crew were seriously ill with scurvy. Five had already died from this. Then there was an added post-script written some weeks later. This said that the only members of the crew able to travel, four in all, were starting across the ice-field to try and make land which they could see in the far distance. The letter ended: "We are alone, weak, unable to help each other. If bears attack us now we shall be devoured alive. Ice and snow reach above the decks on all sides. We have seen several bears and it will be easy for them to get aboard. God have mercy on us!"

We all returned to the village feeling depressed; the natives to return the following day, cut the bear up and bring it ashore in pieces. That awful ridge made it impossible to haul the sleds over it with much of a load on. I became friendly, even chums, with the shaman here. He was a jovial, humorous fellow; kindly and a man who quite evidently enjoyed the society of strangers. He invited me to go to his igloo where he lived quite alone; this igloo was of the regular Alaskan type, with wooden walls, heavy plank-floor, long tunnel and entrance through the floor.

Having nothing better to do one day—there was a gale blowing which made travel impossible—and as we intended to leave directly it let up—I paid a

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

visit to the old shaman's igloo. I crawled down the tunnel and up through the floor. His igloo was neat, even tidy and clean—for an Eskimo's. Different kinds of masks were hanging on pegs. The old shaman was not in at the moment so I sat myself down on the bed-bench to await his return.

In one corner of the igloo I noticed a pile of dirty furs, bones and other refuse, but among it something which glittered and shone with an intriguing sheen. It looked familiar to me, who had been on several goldfields. I arose, walked across to the pile and turned some of the skins over with the toe of my muk-luk. Then I got a shock—and a thrill. There were two skin bags there. Bags made of stout caribou hide which had been tanned, and they were full of gold dust and nuggets; one of the sacks had burst at the neck. In them was gold ranging from the size of rice kernels to others as large as walnuts.

Now the farther and farther we had travelled towards the west, the more we had heard talk of gold. Not wanting the old Angarkut to think that I was prying into his secrets, I put the sacks back exactly as I had found them and covered them again with furs and refuse.

I had hardly returned to where I had been sitting, before the shaman poked his head up through the floor. He was most delighted to see me. Came and patted me on the back, made me sit down beside him on the raised platform and started to question me. Then from some of the questions he

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

asked me I realized that he was not a Tchuck-chi Eskimo, but that he came from one of the Eskimo communities on Norton Bay, Alaska. I questioned him, and at last he admitted that he came from some igloos situated at Frederickstad, close to the mouth of the Yukon River, and that he knew all the territory around Norton Bay and as far north as Cape Lisburne.

He had once joined a whaler at St. Michaels and gone into the Arctic with her. She had wintered at the mouth of the Mackenzie, but owing to the ill treatment he had received aboard her, he had deserted her when she touched at Cape Serdze to trade for furs on her voyage back to the States. This had taken place more than twenty winters previously. What he had learnt about the white man's ways aboard the whaler, had enabled him to assume the role of an Angarkut. Since then he had picked up most of their lore from 'professional brothers of the cult'.

He questioned me eagerly for an hour. Then suddenly he got up from where he was sitting. He remembered the white man's craving and greed for gold and he showed me what he had under his pile of refuse. I pretended surprise and that I knew nothing about the gold. He was amused and delighted at my assumed astonishment, saying that he had more. Going to the other side of the igloo and reaching far under the sleeping shelf, he fetched out three more sacks larger than those I had already seen. These were filled with gold to their necks.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

He must have possessed quite five thousand dollars in all. Finding that the storm had abated, he took me to the place nearby where he had obtained his treasure. It was from the overhanging bank of a stream which must have been dry most of the year. In this twenty foot bank, there was exposed a strata of auriferous gravel of three feet and then a strata of large broken rocks. The gravel near this false 'bed-rock' was about the richest alluvial ground I had seen for many years—and similar ground is to be found in dozens of places in the Tchuck-chi Peninsular.

This part of Siberia is truly a 'Tom Tiddler's' ground of mineral treasure, especially in gold. Wilfully, or otherwise, except in Russia, people close their eyes to the marvellous mineral wealth of Siberia. Not so the Russians and a few Germans. Anhert, the greatest of all German mining engineers and geological experts, admitted by all to be one of the leaders in his profession, estimates that the total of the untouched gold deposits in Siberia at the present price of gold, is greatly in excess of the stupendous sum of £4,000,000,000.

In one district alone in the Province of Amur, the Russians employ 60,000 Chinese and Koreans. An American mining engineer of my acquaintance, a man well known on the Rand, South Africa, said to me: "The mines on the Giluy River (a small tributary of the Amur River) are situated on a vast plain covered by swampy tundra. The thickness of this varies from two to three feet thick. Under

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

this is a thick layer of auriferous sands which have a thickness of from four to six feet ; here the gold is of high quality containing little silver and copper, and small, round grained.

“At Zasilly, the gold is of the same quality, but large grained, porous, with large pieces of rotten quartz mixed with it which contains fifty per cent gold. The turf above is less than two feet thick at an average.

“. . . on the Indigirka River, near Dronkina, there is one of the greatest undeveloped gold-fields that I know of. This district is remarkable for its great resources in gold, its extent and the phenomenally high gold content of its easily worked auriferous sands. In this district the ground is so rich that it is almost impossible to give even an approximate estimate of its gold resources. Here natives have been found with weapons and utensils fashioned out of crude gold. This gold area covers over 28,000 square miles. Owing to the fact that it is so ungetatable, it is a district which up to recent times, has been entirely neglected by the U.S.S.R.

“Deposits of gold ore in the Lake Baikal region, close to Shilka, are in six main veins of massive diorite soil. These average two feet. The gold content here averages £3 per ton of gold ore. Andrev, the Russian engineer, trained on the Rand and in the Western States of America estimates an average of not less than £2 10s. per ton throughout the whole of the vast region.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

“The gold wealth of the Amur Province alone would soon pay off the whole cost of Japan’s war with China, could she only obtain possession of it. The richest parts of the Amur Province in gold contents, are on the River Amazar, a tributary of the Amur River.”

Recently in London I was talking to a great American geologist, one of the world’s leaders in his profession, he stated to me that:

“... the original source of the world’s gold is the mineral mass of gneiss nature, and rocks which contain hornblende in great quantities are naturally exceedingly auriferous.” All this particularly applies to Eastern Siberia, where the central part consists of biotite and gneisses, while along its borders are quartzites, schists and limestones. Every river in Eastern Siberia contains gold, and, therefore may be regarded as potential goldfields of the Nome, Klondyke variety.

Around Okhotsk, on the sea of that name, there have been many finds made as rich as anything known in Nome, this is particularly the case on the creeks near the Orel Lakes and on the small Kol Uda River.

Several chapters could easily be written on the mineral wealth of this area, in fact of all the maritime provinces of Eastern Siberia. In these provinces there are tremendously rich deposits of silver, zinc and platinum, as well as manganese, cinnabar and coal.

Furs. In 1934, twenty-five thousand sable skins

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

were exported from Siberia, these were all prime skins and were sold for more than £50 each pelt. Thirty thousand squirrels were sent from Siberia the same year, and the richest fur regions are all in Eastern Siberia, being, Kamshehatka and Okhotsk. The principal furs exported from these regions are sable, ermine, sea-otter, otter, beaver, mink, muskrat, squirrel, fox of all colours, marmot, badger. The choicest ermines coming from Ischem and Barabinsk, Eastern Siberia, this animal always being killed with small arrows or trapped and are sold in bunches of fifty, called 'timbers'.

Timber. In this Siberia to-day comes first. It is estimated that there are 465,000,000 acres of virgin forests in Western Siberia and that Eastern Siberia has sufficient to supply the whole world for centuries to come. America to-day is almost denuded of her forests and western Canada is fast getting in the same condition.

To return to the Angarkut; I asked him what he intended to do with all his wealth. He laughed, thought for a moment, then said, "kai-no-me." (I don't know.)

Then he showed me a stock of furs, another caribou sack containing a few ounces of platinum and as I was leaving he had another thought.

"Before I die, I give um all away. Stay-pee-uck-tuck," everything, all will be gone.

This old Angarkut or shaman, had the same belief which I had found so prevalent among the up-river Indians on the Yukon River, Alaska.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

I actually once witnessed an instance of this, this was when I was camped at a village at the junction of the Koy-uk-uk and Yukon Rivers. He firmly believed that he had the power of keeping his soul separately from his body, and in some animal which he kept secret from everyone. He explained it to me in this way:

“Once in each winter, every great shaman has the power to force his animal-soul to appear before him in the village in which he may be residing at the time. But that he could never do this twice the same season. That for the remainder of the year these animal-souls wander anywhere, yet none but great Angarkuts were able to see them or recognize them as animal-souls. That even the great shamans could only see them when wearing the *tung-haat* mask; this being the mask which enables shamans to see the animal-souls, the souls of evil spirits and the ghosts of those recently departed. The smaller and less powerful shamans or those who are still disciples, have their souls in dogs or lesser animals, but great shamans such as I, have their souls in bears or wolves. Mine is in a wolf, when that wolf dies or is killed, I shall die the same moment.

“When I die that wolf will die instantly.”

He claimed that when he wished to kill or to punish an enemy or someone who had done him ill, he was able to send his wolf-soul, or animal in which his soul resided into the body of his enemy. This would cause the enemy to act exactly like a wolf, until he died raving mad—this was what I had

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

witnessed as alluded to above—or cause the shaman's enemy to act like a wolf for a period of seven years. During this seven years the man would be a were-wolf.

I found that there was a great dread of were-wolves amongst certain communities, but not in all. This was the case in the Province of Quebec in certain parts, up to the middle of the last century. Many of the Tchuck-chis were convinced that all great shamans were able to turn themselves into wolves-souls at will, and that they also had the power of feeding on the livers of sleepers, both men and women, who had offended the shamans or the spirits of certain animals. It was this belief in certain communities which made the natives so careful about keeping taboos.

The shaman explained to me that when a young hunter killed his first animal of any species, he and those residing in his igloo, would carefully gather up every bone of the animal, no matter how small, and give them back to their natural element. If it was a seal, all its bones were taken out a mile or more on to the ice-field where a hole was cut in the ice and they were thrust through. If it were a land animal, then its bones were buried in a hole in the ground. If this were done, and care had been taken that no bone had been broken, then each bone would become another animal of the same species, and they would allow the hunter to kill them at some period during his life.

This same belief was prevalent among the

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Eskimos at Point Barrow, Alaska, about seals or walrus, where the theory prevailed that each bone not broken would if treated in this manner, become a seal or walrus, multiply and always bring good hunting to the hunter who had first killed it. Both he and the Point Barrow Eskimos had a kind of belief in the resurrection of animals good for food such as seals, walrus and whales. The souls of these animals were supposed to reside in certain parts of the entrails of the animals, usually the intestines, the stomach or the bladder. That if any one of these parts of the animal were cleaned and returned to the sea within twenty-four hours of its being killed, not only would the animal be immediately re-born, but that its soul would be so pleased, it would multiply at once and this off-spring would always be at hand for the hunter to kill.

Once each winter this shaman would call the whole of the community together for what amounted to a harvest—or hunting—festival of thanksgiving. This would be held in the ka-jim. Then each hunter would bring with him an inflated bladder made from some animal. This would be tied on to the end of his favourite harpoon or lance, which would be stuck up in the centre of the ka-jim and the hunters would dance around them. Many a time I have officiated at the drums. The bladders would wave about caused by the disturbances in the air through the dancing and this would prove that the animal-spirits were pleased with the attention being shown them. All these dances were done in panto-

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

mime—of the animals actions, his method of eating, sleeping, how the hunter hunted him and the kill.

No woman and no girl who had reached the age of puberty was allowed to enter the ka-jinn whilst these dances were being held ; all food being fetched in by young boys. Women who had reached the age of maturity would have offended the animal's souls, as they were naturally unclean. The festival ended on the third night. Then the shaman deflated the bladders, and followed by all the males of the community, he took them far out on the ice-field and there they were buried under a small igloo of snow.

Except in a few minor details, all this was identical with what I had seen years before at the Eskimo village of Stebbins, on the Yukon side of St. Michaels Island, and also at Kooick, on Norton Bay. During all the time of the festival, no man was allowed to have intercourse with his wife as she would have contaminated him.

The night after the festival ended, a native was cohabiting with his wife in the igloo in which I was residing, and no more attention was shown by the others than would have been done by animals. I marvelled to think that white men could take them for wives. That is of course the Arctic Eskimo ; yet I have known of white men of good breeding who have done this, one was an ex-licutenant, R.N. These women are good, industrious wives when married to their own kind, but when married to

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

white men they are quite the reverse in most cases. They get lazy and know that it is almost certain that their white man will not beat them. Unless he does this, however, they will leave every scrap of work for him to do, worse still, they will send for their relatives and have all these sponging around his house. This soon demoralizes the whole community; they neglect their fishing and hunting, then unless the white man has ample supplies, there is starvation when the winter comes.

If the squaw has a child by the white man she gets worse and worse. I knew of one white man, the famous 'Arry Briggs, who took an Eskimo squaw home, washed her, rigged her out decently in good clothes and the next day she seemed to smell as badly as ever. He finally got rid of her and took an Innuït for a wife; she made him a splendid partner.

Soon after the festival alluded to, I was on my way again and accompanied by some Tchuck-chis—five men and three women. These had one sled drawn by eleven dogs, and we were making a portage of about ten miles across a long strip of tundra-plain which thrust itself out into the sea. When about half-way across, one of the women fell to the ground and began moaning and squirming, she seemed to be in great pain. I was then informed that she was in child-birth. Assisted by the other women she had her baby there and then, the navel-cord being cut with an ordinary hunting knife. That night in the igloo she was as hale and

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

hearty as any of the women and went about her duties as unconcernedly as if nothing had happened.

There is no doubt that though these women lead hard lives, they are always in the pink of condition, and the rigors of their Arctic existence enables them to undergo things which would kill their civilized sisters.

I knew of one instance of two squaws who were starving, who wriggled out on the ice after a seal, imitating a seal's actions the whole time, finally killing him after many hours. They were so emaciated that they had to lay beside the animal and suck its life-giving blood for the next two days. One of these women was an old squaw and the other her daughter.

I knew another old squaw named Tee-ckuck—she lived on St. Michaels island—who had lost half her face in a fight with a bear. Yet this old woman was as strong as the average young man, and was known for a hundred miles round for the beautiful designs she would sew in minute pieces of fur round parkas and muk-luks. This old squaw once hauled a sled loaded with two hundred pounds of goods, from the store of the Alaska Commercial Co. to Stebbins, a distance of fifteen miles.

CHAPTER TEN

CHILDREN AND THEIR TREATMENT—A RUSSIAN DWARF
AND FAMILY—A CARIBOU FEAST—A POLAR BEAR HUNT
AND DESPERATE FIGHT—AURORA BOREALIS—I FALL
SICK—AVALANCHES AND LANDSLIDES—A SHAMAN'S
CURE

I BEGAN to notice that the further I travelled west, the more the habits of the natives were changing; though still distinctly Eskimos, they were breaking away from many Eskimo habits, customs and traditions and even to some extent in their racial ways. If a line were drawn where this began I should mark this from Koliuchin Bay.

The girls now appeared to mature at an earlier age, as early as seven or eight. Again, I ran across communities where it was the custom for a girl on reaching the age of maturity, to cohabit with all her male relatives. Until she had done this she was not considered suitable for marriage; here was a habit I had run across among Indian tribes in Southern Mexico and in certain parts of Central America. Amongst these tribes, a mother would take her daughter to some fiesta, held in a village several miles from her home, and there secure a likely young man to stay with her daughter. Then the

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

girl was brought home to her own village and was fit for marriage.

Young Tchuck-chis girls around Cape Oman, and from there as far west as I travelled, had usually given birth to their first child by the time they were ten years of age. I was assured by many women—and this was borne out by Stephan's wife—that the breasts of women in these parts, never dried up after having their first child.

Speaking of women and their children, I have noticed that among the Eskimos from the mouth of the Mackenzie River, Arctic Canada, right across Arctic Alaska, down to the mouth of the Yukon River, where the true Eskimos end, and as far as I went across Arctic Siberia, the treatment of children by these people was splendid. Brutality, such as is known in the slums of large, so-called civilized cities, was absolutely unknown. It was seldom that they were scolded and I have never seen a child slapped or shaken. Granted they are put to small childish tasks at the age of four or five, but so they are in the East End of London in the sweat-homes of the poorer Jews.

The work of the Eskimo boy children will be pricking holes in the pieces of seal-hide intended for muk-luk soles. These holes will be all round the sides and so facilitate sewing by the squaws. The little girls, so soon as they have teeth, will be put to chewing the edges of these same soles or other hard skins which have to be sewn. By the time the little girl is six or seven she will have to do her share of

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

fishing for tom-cod. When the boy reaches the age of seven he will be put to lashing the joints and struts of sleds and if he shows the aptitude, even allowed to lash the heads on spears and harpoons. From that age on he will start practising with his weapons, shooting with bows and arrows, throwing the harpoon and using the lance. He will be trained by his father in the use of the single-seater ky-ak, and in the use of snow-shoes. By the time he is ten or eleven he will be capable of breaking-trail ahead of the dogs, driving a team, hunting small game and—unknown perhaps to dad—taking his harpoon and having a try after seal on his own account.

To see one of these children crying or acting in a disobedient manner and like a spoilt little beast, is almost unknown. I have never seen such a thing. I think that they are the best behaved kiddies I have ever known.

My next stop was close to a cape to the east of Kaikaipto Island, and of which I have never been able to find the name. The community here of three igloos was at the head of a delightful small bay. I was induced to make a stop here owing to the fact that for the first time I had run across a kind of trading post.

This post was owned by a man of mixed Yakut, Bariut and Russian blood. He was short, not more than four feet six inches in height, with the torso of a gorilla. His chest measurement next his skin was fifty-eight inches and his huge muscular arms, thick as the average man's thighs, were so long that

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

his hands reached below his knees. He spoke Eskimo fluently and had some knowledge of English. He had made two trips to St. Michaels Island since taking up his residence where I found him, and had served at one time on a pelagic sealer running out of Victoria, British Columbia. On this vessel he had been a boat-steerer, and told of the enormous money they made in the hey-day of pelagic sealing.

This man had a broad, flat mongolian type of face, with high cheek bones, showing the Tartar strain. A thin scraggly moustache decorated his upper lip and two labrets of gold his lower lip. His wife, he said was a Bariut. She was a strong, kindly but perfectly horrible looking person, almost revolting. They had eight children; the man called them his babas. His house was faultlessly clean and he had built a Russian stove in it on which, of course, we all slept at night.

He was inordinately proud of the fact that he possessed six tin-enamelled cups and plates. He had his own supply of Russian brick-tea which he procured from Russians in the Anadyr district. Also some dark brown sugar in small cubes. He regaled me with a splendid meal of caribou steaks, Russian bread and pints of steaming tea.

The next day he took me on a journey of fifteen miles into the interior to a village which was holding a great feast of caribou meat. When we arrived we found the feast in full swing, and the ka-jim packed to suffocation. It is really marvellous the

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

way Eskimos can pack themselves into small places; at any rate it makes for warmth even if it does increase the smells.

The natives were having a grand time, indulging in one of their orgies after a successful hunt. They were seated on caribou skins, round a large seal hide stretched over a wooden frame; on this rested the stomach of a dead caribou which had been filled with the blood of the dead animal. Each took it in turn to put his mouth to a spout which had been made in the stomach and then drink his fill. When this had been emptied, the next course was ready. This consisted of the four legs of an animal. These were placed on two planks, and each man proceeded to help himself by cutting off pieces, dipping them in a bowl of blood and stuffing them in his mouth as fast as he was able to bolt them down.

All round the sides of the large ka-jim, forming a dado on its walls, hung pieces of carcasses. These dripping blood on the floor, or on anyone sitting near them. The Russian breed and I were received with the greatest enthusiasm, he receiving a particularly warm welcome; and their cheerful, kindly faces, covered as they were with blood from hair to chin, presented a laughable appearance, though some might have thought them rather devilish. Though by now feasts were just feasts to me. I do not think that anything I could have seen or been offered would have turned my stomach—or astonished me. After all, I had seen some weird

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

and queer things amongst tribes in Central America and Central Africa.

It was amongst these Eskimos that for the first time I noticed a considerable amount of eye trouble. This seemed to me to be mainly amongst the women and children, who had eyes swollen and badly inflamed. It was here that I saw an old blind woman put to death by her own wish. One morning, with the glass at fifty below zero, she was taken out of the igloo, then led out on to the ice of the frozen lagoon. Here she was halted by the man on either side of her. Next her parka and trousers were taken off her by the shaman. When this was done she was told to walk ahead by herself.

Not six feet from where she had been halted to remove her outer furs, and directly to her front, a large hole had been cut in the ice and kept open. She commenced to walk ahead as soon as she had been told, and her third step carried her right into the hole. She sank, and must have been dead in a couple of minutes for nothing on earth could have survived the shock of that terrifically cold water.

In the igloo in which I slept that night, including the Russian breed and myself, we made a party of nine, sleeping in a space of nine feet by nine feet six inches—I measured it. In addition there was a baby of about twelve months. This child was unique in its own little way, for at the start of the night it cried continuously. Several natives then began another onslaught on raw caribou meat about midnight. The mother of the squalling baby, who

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

was seated beside my sleeping bag, stripped to the waist, dipped small pieces of blubber into the bowl of blood, then stuffed them into her mouth. Alternating these tasty tit-bits with chunks of meat dipped in the same gory sauce. Suddenly the baby let out a louder squawk than usual, this must have given the mother a brilliant idea. Taking a small piece of blubber, she dipped this in the bowl of blood and fed it to the baby. The child disposed of several pieces of this and then quietly went to sleep in a robe of beautiful fox skins, which would have been the envy of many a society beauty.

On returning to the village with the Russian breed, I went the following day with some of the natives there on a polar bear hunt. It was a dark misty morning when we started out from the shore. The brilliant aurora which had been displaying its wonders, was now dimmed by the mist and a little snow was falling. In addition to my partner, Stephan and myself, there were four natives and we were divided into two parties. My partner was with one, I was with the other, and to each party there were attached five bear dogs.

Our dogs kept scouting ahead of us, but returning to our sides every few moments. Then suddenly I heard faint barking from two dogs to my left front. It seemed to me to be a considerable distance ahead, in the direction in which I knew that there were several open leads. I knew that our dogs must either be on the track of the bears recently seen, or must have one which they were holding at bay.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Following the natives, we went in the direction of the barking, hoping that the dogs would be able to hold the bear. The way we took through the misty darkness was over narrow leads; tumbled, hummocky ice against which there were deep snow drifts. This had once been a level field, but owing to recent storms and the terrific pressure of the ice-fields from the north, and from great Arctic bergs which had drifted down, it was now more like a great stone quarry which had recently been blown up by a mighty charge of dynamite.

It concealed holes, traps and even chasms at every few feet, making walking extremely difficult and even dangerous. Twice I fell, plunging the barrel of my rifle into snow drifts and this made us lose time, as I had to stop and clear the barrel each time.

As we approached the place from which the barking of the dogs came, we could tell by the action of the dogs, and the noise that they were making, that they had a bear at bay. Then, in the mist we saw a white giant giving swinging blows at his small tormentors. The mist cleared by a puff of wind, the moon shone brightly, and clearly silhouetted against the ice-field, a great polar bear standing on his hind legs, with his back to a wide lead. He was making vigorous rushes at times at his active enemies. Then he would rise again on his hind legs. As soon as he did this his active tormentors would nip behind him and bite at his back legs. All this time he was making a growling, savage snarling

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

noise, but when he rose on his hind legs he would let out loud and angry roars.

Stephan now begged me to allow him to have my rifle, finally I did so; and taking a long lance from one of the natives, Stephan walked up to within twenty yards of the polar bear, and aiming at it, fired. He said afterwards that he aimed at its neck, unluckily for him it hit the brute in its shoulder; he turned and started for the lead. Stephan ran after him and fired at him again. I heard the bullet hit with that resounding smack which a hunter or soldier knows so well. Then the bear turned and made a vicious charge at the nearest dogs.

Stephan now became excited, and lost his head, firing again and again; hitting the bear twice, but not in any vital part. Other shots missed. Now he had only one cartridge left in his magazine, but did not know it. To make sure of hitting the bear in a vital part, he rashly ran up to within six yards of the beast. From this distance he fired, hitting the bear in the shoulder again. Up the bear reared on his hind legs, and was on Stephan in a second, who pulled the trigger of his rifle again only to hear it 'click'.

Now with mouth wide open, paws ready to rip and rend him, the bear had Stephan at its mercy. I rushed forward with the natives to plunge our lances into the beast's belly, but Stephan, taking the rifle and using it as a lance, thrust the point of the barrel with all his strength down the gaping mouth before him. The gleaming teeth closed on the barrel with a snap.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

The impact threw Stephan on to his back on the ice. For a second the bear stood over Stephan and as he did so, my lance and those of two of the natives were jabbed into him. With a bellow of pain he turned, dropped on his four paws and started to beat a hasty retreat. In a second the dogs were at and all round him. They smelt his blood and knew that their chance had come. And now a native on each side jabbed him again and again with their lances. In five minutes he was dead. Then one native went back to the shore for the sleds.

The sky was now clear and a glorious coloured aurora borealis was flaming across the sky. Truly speaking, that far north, the aurora is always visible in some form.

Now it swayed, scintillated and played in ever-changing forms of beauty right across the vast cupola of the Arctic heavens in kaleidoscopic changing and blending colours of radiant glory. In a few seconds flashing from yellow of all shades to deep green; from rose pink to the deepest red and then into superb purples. The mighty curtains of colour would swing back and open like the great drop-scenes on a world stage, break into pillars of twining, serpentine bands. These would plait themselves until they became tremendous pillars of flaming coloured fire, darting rapidly from the horizon to the zenith, and lighting the surrounding ice-fields with the most marvellous rays of divine colour.

The whole sky was blazing with colour. Glorious,

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

sublime; then suddenly as if by the touch of the hand of the Divine Switchman at the electric board, the whole would disappear. Leaving only a faint spot of radiant light on either side of the Arctic horizon. Then once again the Divine Expert of flood-lighting would in an instant, send glimmering floods of lambent luminous streamers forth and spectroscopic twisting snakes of a dozen colours; streamers, curtains, clouds, rainbows and marvellous blazes of light would play in fantastic shapes, but never any two alike for many seconds.

And, as I have so often thought in the uncanny Arctic: "Fools say that there is no God."

Not a sound was heard in the stillness of the Arctic night, save only the gentle swish, swish, swish, made by the aurora, so soft, so low, so infinitely gentle. Only that utter Arctic stillness allowed ones ears to tune in to the faint sound from the heavens above.

Well might the Tchuck-chis Eskimos, and Innuits have one word for this: 'The dance of the departed spirits'.

I now had a bad attack of sickness which laid me up for several days. Two or three things seemed to bother me at the same time. My eyes were badly affected for the first and only time by snow-blindness. Though this was due to the glare of the snow, so dangerous in the months of March, April, May and June; they had also been affected considerably by the irritation from the smoke in the last igloo where the squaws never seemed to keep their lamps

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

properly trimmed. Further irritation was caused from dirt and—this happily proved to be wrong—I thought that I might have contracted some eye disease; so prevalent among the natives hereabouts.

Here I should like to explain how superior are native snow shades for the eye, compared with those of civilization.

The native cuts a pair of spectacles out of wood. The pieces over the eyes are round pieces of wood the size of a half-crown. In this eye-piece there will be a tiny slit which the eye can see through. Then all round the eye and the top of the cheek, the native will rub greasy soot made from his blubber lamp. This will prevent the terrible ice-glint from reflecting on to the eye, and the wooden piece on the bridge of the nose will not freeze to the skin.

I doctored my eyes with tea-leaf compresses and kept them entirely covered from the light for three days; by that time they were better. Another trouble that I had at the same time was with my legs. I suffered no pain, but from my knees down, my legs swelled to the size of my thighs, and I seemed to lose every scrap of my tremendous energy and vitality. I could push the top of my finger into the swollen parts of my legs, and when I withdrew it, the hole would stay there until I massaged it back. Then my wrists began to swell and for several days I could hardly move my hands or feet. Then, as if this were not enough, my throat got so sore that I could hardly swallow broth made for me by

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Stephan's wife, and my tonsils were badly inflamed, my breath having a most objectionable smell. All my mouth was ulcerated.

In all my journeyings about the world, I have always carried permanganate of potash, and this I now used freely for my mouth and throat. I also confined my nourishment to thick, deer-meat broth made by Stephan or his wife and boiled fish: making sure that this fish was at least not rotten. It was ten days before I was able to travel again.

The igloo in which I had been living during this time was on a slight bank on the seashore; the bank being ten feet high and just above high-water mark. The bank sloped gently up and back to the base of some great cliffs, which were about two hundred feet high and perhaps one hundred yards back from the igloos.

One night when I was asleep, I was awakened by a thunderous roar nearby. This was followed by a pandemonium of sound, together with the terrified howling and yelping of all the dogs. In a second we were all sitting up. "What the hell is happening?" I thought.

A native came up through the tunnel entrance, saying that it was snowing hard, and that he could not see a yard from the other end of the tunnel.

Almost as he spoke, there was another thunderous roar, the ground shook and there was a violent rushing sound as of a tremendous gale of wind.

"Ye Gods," I thought. "Are the cliffs toppling over? Is it a volcanic eruption?" For there are

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

many volcanic islands in the north and many volcanos only recently extinct.

Something unpleasant was taking place! That was certain. Nothing could be done in the dark and in a snowstorm, so we sat their waiting. The men and women kept their nerves splendidly, only one or two of the kiddies showed any trace of fear.

When one has knocked about the world as I have done for nearly fifty years, one gets fatalistic and this especially applies to the mighty powers of the North. There is a saying up there amongst real old-timers: "Stay here long enough. Get careless and make one slip and the Arctic will get you." We lay down and went to sleep again.

Next morning we found that about a half mile west of the igloos, a large part of the cliff had fallen forward, loosening an avalanche of glacier ice and snow. This had swept down and out on to the anchored-ice for a mile.

It was a close call for a total wiping out of the village and every soul in it, including my party. It only just missed us, and even as we watched we saw other parts of the cliff falling forward.

The temperature now got very low. The piercing cold seemed to freeze the very marrow in my bones. I got frost bites easily. It was the bad condition I was in. Laying around in the igloos had been bad for all of us. Our tempers got on edge. Now I have about the vilest temper any man can have. Knowing this, on the trail I never allowed it to be shown. This irksome idleness gave it the chance to flare-up.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

I was worried over my health and our food. Food was being consumed and the village was not too well stocked with this. At last as I mended, I would sit for hours in that igloo idle and feeling I had no backbone or guts left. Then the shaman took a hand. At last, after he had pleaded with me with tears in his eyes, I took some stinking, vile concoction which he brewed for me. All that day I felt as if I was recovering from a bad bout of drinking.

During that night, the sweat poured off me in streams, but in the morning I was as fit as ever.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

ESKIMO SEAL HUNT—MA-UK-TOK AUK-TUK—A YANKEE
GIANT HERMIT—HIS FIGHT WITH THE ARCTIC—A
VILLAGE UNDER TABOO

FEELING that I owed a deep debt of gratitude to the shaman, and to the natives who had shown me such hospitality and kindness, I decided to assist them in a seal hunt which was taking place. Here it will be as well to give a short description of the habits of the seal.

Immediately the first of the winter frosts arrive, and an icy brine forms on the seashore, giving warning to all who will heed, that the freeze-up will soon take place, each seal, accepts the warning. In a few days ice will begin to form over the seas, then each seal, no matter where he may happen to be, decides that that particular locality will be where he will reside for the winter. He immediately sets to work and gnaws a series of holes—never more than six—in the ice. These he will attend to constantly, as the cold gets more severe and the ice thickens. These are his breathing holes, and for the greater part of the winter, he has to visit them constantly, gnawing at each in turn. For

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

all that winter he is a prisoner in the vicinity of his breathing holes, for were he to travel far from them, he would be unable to find a breathing hole and soon suffocate.

The Eskimos are able to locate these holes by the aid of their dogs, hidden as they are by snow which blows over and covers them; though given a smooth expanse of ice—a rarity in the North—the holes can be spotted owing to the fact that there is always a small mound of snow over a hole. This is caused by the seal continually gnawing up from below and more snow drifting over each time from above.

There are really two methods of hunting the seal, that is in the Far North—in the lands to the north of the American continent and along the shores of the Siberian Arctic—though the first method which I shall describe is fast dying out owing to the use of firearms.

The first method is what is called by the Eskimos, the *ma-uk-tok*, or watching method. This corresponds to, and requires all the patience of an angler using rod, line and float. For this method each man takes one dog with him on a long leash of rawhide. The dog walks ahead of the hunter, wildly excited at the prospect of a hunt, for he knows from past experience that this will mean extra food; yet he will be perfectly quiet, for he also knows that noise will scare the food away.

The native I accompanied, had trained his dog to work without a leash. The dog working much as a pointer would do; ranging ahead of his master at a

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

distance of from twenty to thirty yards, circling in all directions, and constantly standing perfectly still and sniffing the air. After walking in this manner for more than two miles from the shore, the dog began to circle round and round a certain part and then came trotting back to the hunter, eager to lead him to where he located a hole, then once more advancing slowly and cautiously towards a slight mound in the snow. The hunter walked up to this and kept jabbing round it with his harpoon until he had located the exact position of the hole underneath, but taking the greatest care that he did not disturb or break the mound.

Once he had located the direct centre of the seal's breathing hole, the next thing he did was to gently but firmly press down all the mound and the surrounding snow, so that no air could be sucked through it from below. This would make it seem to the seal that the hole had been frozen over above and necessitate opening immediately. When he had finished pressing the snow tightly, he prepared to set his signal or 'float'. This was a long sinew, about the thickness of his little finger and about four feet in length. One end of this had been split into a prong with three fingers; at the other end a feather had been attached. Making a hole in the snow-mound with his harpoon, he pressed the pronged end of the sinew through until the feather protruded a foot above the snow.

Now, the seal must breath fresh air at frequent intervals, and as he knows that the ice is con-

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

stantly thickening, he goes to each hole in strict rotation, gnawing it larger and larger to keep it clear from the ice, and so that now his shoulders can push up into the lower part of the opening. His teeth are shaped and fitted into his mouth almost like those of a rabbit and this enables him to cut through the ice at an amazing pace.

Having found a hole and arranged his signal, the hunter now stands motionless above the hole, his eyes fixed intently on his signal-feather. Poised aloft in his hand is his harpoon. This has a detachable head to which is attached a long line of seal-hide. When the seal comes to the hole to breathe, he will rub his head against the pronged sinew beneath the hole, this will agitate the feather above, warning the hunter that the seal is forcing his head up. This makes the hunter instantly on the qui-vive. He will give the seal time to force its way up through the hole beneath, waiting until its nose is almost at the point where the feather is showing. At this moment the hunter plunges his deadly harpoon down with all his force at the exact point where the feather-end of the sinew protrudes from the snow, and the head of the harpoon will penetrate into the seal's head.

The instant that his harpoon has struck, the hunter drops the handle-end of the weapon and begins to haul in on the line so that the seal has no chance to sink below the ice and wedge himself there. The hunter I was with was less than half an hour at a hole before he struck. When he had done

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

so he called to me that he had struck a 'big fellow'. I ran to him and helped him, holding fast to the hide line while he widened the hole with his ice-knife. Then we hauled the seal out on the ice and he was soon dispatched. This chap was a huge fellow, of the peculiar type whose markings are straw yellow with two or three enormous black patches on its body. In five hours we had killed three seals in this manner, the last being a fine bearded seal. The other hunters had all been lucky and were jubilant. I received the credit of having a soul in affinity with those of the seals and in consequence had caused them to flock to their holes to be killed.

The seal is of such really vital importance to the Eskimo, that at the risk of being boring I must show what they mean to these people. As the buffalo were to the Indians of the western plains, as rice is to many of the people of the Far East, as salmon is to the Haida and Siwash Indians of the British Columbia coast, and bread to millions of the poor whites of Europe, so is the seal to the Eskimo—and much more besides. For in addition to furnishing meat and fat for food, the seal provides fuel for light and heat and also much material for clothing. Hide for footwear—muk-luks—his intestines are made into raincoats and windows, coats of certain kinds are made from his hide, the covering for all ky-aks and the great bearded seal and leopard seal provide skins for the great oomiaks when there is a shortage of walrus. His back sinew is shredded

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

into thin twine for sewing; small pieces of his blubber are as sweeties to the Eskimo child.

The other method of seal hunting, and the one most used where the natives have fire-arms, is known as *auk-tuk*. This method is by stalking. Any hunter (white) who has had experience in stalking game in Africa would find this comparatively easy. The principle used, simple as it is, is the same used in stalking certain kinds of deer and antelope. Clothed as an Eskimo hunter is in furs, he advances towards the seal in exactly the same manner which the seal uses in moving over ice. Seals have not got good eyesight, and when lying on ice-fields with an unbroken surface, their range of vision is less than three hundred yards.

The seal, unlike other animals does not sleep for a given period and then keep awake for another lengthy period. Roughly he sleeps for from forty-five to sixty seconds—never longer—and is awake for roughly from twenty to twenty-five seconds. If seals slept for longer periods, with polar bear and natives constantly hunting them, they would become extinct in a few seasons. The seal will sleep for his usual time, awake, instantly raise his head, have a good look round the whole of the horizon, and then be asleep again in a second.

The seal is constantly on the move when out on the ice, rubbing himself against any ice-hummock near his hole, scratching his sides, twisting his body into curves, keeping his hind flippers constantly on the move, and more like a fidgety monkey than any-

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

thing else. And this is the procedure which the Eskimo hunter adopts as he crawls towards the seal.

The closer you get to your prey, the more you must keep up these antics—*so long as he is awake*. When he is sleeping, then wriggle forward as fast as you are able. Once he has looked you well over, and has accepted you as another seal up to his fool antics, he will let you get almost up to him. Eskimos will get to within as close as twenty feet of a seal before using a harpoon, but in using my rifle I always thought that I had done well when I stalked to within fifty yards—but then I had not the same seal-aroma that the Eskimo has.

The hunter killing with a rifle should always aim at the head of the seal. A bullet from a .44 or a .45-70 hitting him there will kill him instantly. But wound him and he will be in his hole in a few seconds, if it is his last wriggle and he dies as he makes it. Then the hunter will most certainly have lost him. I killed four seals in this manner in two days, and then felt that I had slightly repaid my debt to the natives.

Leaving this village we rounded the unknown cape and after one night's sleeping out in a hollowed snow-drift at the base of a small cliff, the next day we ran out on the ice-field which connected the island of Kaipaito with the mainland. This island is slightly to the east of Cape Oman and a great rendezvous for walrus in April and May when the ice is honey-combed and rotten in the midday. The Russian-Bariut breed had told me that he had

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

heard rumours that there was an American living there but that he did not believe it; the tale was, he said, that he had recently taken up his abode there and that he was a very old man.

Now in the pictures, and in all good books of fiction about the North, the criminal fleeing from justice makes for the North and there he hides himself from all. Tosh! No stranger can be in the North for many weeks without it being known for hundreds of miles all round where he has settled. Why, when carrying the mail, and arriving at the Post where I was to hand it over to the next carrier, I have had to sit up for almost twenty-four hours telling the most minute happenings I had heard of at the last camp. Repeating every rumour I had heard, possible or impossible. No, a criminal might be able to hide in the next street to a police station, but he will not hide in the North. The first post to which he goes to buy supplies or more ammunition will not ask him his *real name*, nor care a hang, but they would soon think it funny if he refused to be friendly and not spend some time chatting.

However, we crossed to the island and there, in a stoutly built log-cabin made from drift timber, I found one of the most interesting old men I ever met in the North. No squaw for this old fellow. He was living all alone, except for a little Eskimo lad of twelve whom he had brought with him from King Island, on the Alaskan side of the Behring Straits. This old man had come from Nome City, sailing from the mouth of Snake River in a ship's long-

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

boat which he had almost completely roofed over with well-oiled canvas, so that there was only a small cockpit left aft in which he stood to steer.

He was a giant of a man, even with the slight stoop he had, standing six feet three inches in his muk-luks. He told me that on his next birthday he would be sixty-eight. He had a fine shaped head, with a rugged face, a mass of deep lines. A high forehead, broad and deep and with many lines furrowing it. He had a thick mop of almost pure white hair, which not having been cut for many months, now fell to his shoulders. His brilliant, piercing eyes, hawk-like and peering through to narrow slits, were topped by thick, bushy eyebrows. His mouth was well shaped, he wore a heavy moustache, a beard which hung down to his chest and out from his face, stuck the kind of nose usually credited to the Duke of Wellington.

The old man told me that he had sailed in nearly every whaler out of Frisco in the good days and had kept at it until they had all quit. Then at last he had found himself one of the old, unwanted shell-backs, but he had that priceless thing no money can buy, knowledge gained by experience.

Theory may be all right, but it must be backed by experience. There was not a port, sound, river-mouth, inlet, narrows or anchorage from Frisco to St. Michaels, and then north to Capes Lisborne, Hope and Point Barrow, he could not steer a ship to and of which he did not know the soundings.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

He knew most of the larger Aleutian Islands, the passes there, Kadiak Island, the islands St. George and St. Paul—the two seal rookeries—and even many of the anchorages on the Siberian side as far west as the New Siberian Islands.

For some years he had been tolerated as a hanger-on in the sailors' boarding-house run by Spanish Pete, on the Embarcadero, Frisco. Getting his board and keep for doing the chores, chopping wood, making beds, cleaning out the bar, acting as messenger, making mats, singing the old chanteys for drunken men off iron-freighters who thought themselves sailors; in fact acting as an old slave for the crimp who owned the dump.

Then one day he had had a drink or two more than usual, and had plucked up enough spirit to answer the crimp back when he abused him. That was all he remembered. The next morning he had awakened in the fo'c'sle of the steamer *Ketchikan*, bound for Dutch Harbour, St. Michaels, Nome City and other points north as far as Point Barrow.

He had come out of his drugged sleep with a splitting headache and a great thirst, to see the shores of the Golden Gate, the entrance to San Francisco harbour, fading in the distance. The crew of the *Ketchikan*, he told me, were made up of dock-hands, wharf-rats, city bums and hoboes, and the *Ketchikan*, an iron steamer hastily built at the Moran Brothers' works in Seattle, was heavily overloaded, pitching and tossing as she plunged her bows into

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

the great Pacific rollers outside the entrance to the harbour.

Off the bar of the Columbia River, the graveyard of hundreds of vessels, they had almost gone under. The *Ketchikan* rolled several times at such an angle that he thought she would never right herself. There were 'girls' aboard her going up North to make a few honest (?) dollars, and the officers seemed to hate leaving the poor dears by themselves. I will take up the tale as the old seaman told it to me in his cabin.

"The stinking bitterness," said old Heddle, "of the rotgut and doped moonshine I had drunk sickened me. My insides felt as if they had been soused out with lye, and my head went round and round like a circus roundabout.

"That night I listened to the whining and rubbing of the fo'c'sle hands. Sailors! Bah! They was not even decent farmers. Well anyhow," I thought, "I'm at sea again and they said I was too old. I'll show 'em.

"I awoke the next morn' to consciousness, and action, when the bucko mate started using a knuckle-duster in one hand and a belaying pin in the other in the fo'c'sle to rouse the hands.

"'On deck! Stir youse lousy bums! Jump to it you scum of the barns and wharves!'

"I avoided a swing of his belaying pin and jumped as he said. But out of the corner of my eyes I watched the manner of men pressed aboard that iron packet for a fo'c'sle crew. Not a single man of

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

them stamped with the hall-mark of the deep-water seamen. All were narrow-chested, narrow-shouldered and puny. Just plain mean and not much better than gangsters. Weak scum and nasty as any pimp from the 'red-light' area.

"Mr. Mate, impressive in his blue uniform and gold braid, with a peaked cap and a badge as large as a small saucer, looked like a 'cop' of the Frisco waterfront showing off his new uniform. I rapped the iron plates as I got on deck, stared at all the deck fittings, looked up at the steel mast, then I thought of the staunch, oak-ribbed, teak-sided whalers that I had sailed north in, in the years gone by. Whalers with six feet of stout, solid teak in their bows. Ships with four feet of solid teak or oak round their sides, so stout that when nipped in the ice, they could and did withstand pressure which would have sunk any other kind of craft.

"The seas were rolling in towards the west coast of British Columbia and she was making bad weather, as I swung, with braced legs, to the kick, pitch and roll of the *Ketchikan*. The crew jeered at me for an old 'has-been' and told me that I should have been at home in the resort for old sailors.

"Yet what I saw from the fo'c'sle companionway as I stood and looked aft, was enough to dismay a deep-water sailor. The *Ketchikan*, was a steam-packet, new that year. To me she resembled a monstrosity that floated and drove through the waves of the North Pacific, without the slightest

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

benefit of good seamanship. I learned that the skipper and all three mates had never been in the Arctic seas before.

"I felt the throbbing of the *Ketchikan's* powerful engines, the racking tear and drive of the screw, the tremor that ran through the new 'tin-can'. That's all she was. Just a bunch of iron riveted together. Not much more than a large-sized 'tin-can'.

"Then they had the cast-iron nerve, the blank gall, to send me below to help the chief engineer with his crew of oilers and oil-fire tenders. Said I was too old and useless to be on deck. That I was better out of the way and for the chief to send up one of his he-men for the deck. Me who had been bos'n on such whalers as the *Karluk*, *Bowhead*, *Northern Lights*, and *Narwhal*, and others. There I stuck in that engine-room for a week, then I was promoted—as they said—to oiler.

"I said to the chief one day: 'You may be right about your engines, but give me sails!' He laughed, and for half an hour I had to listen to him about modern things, ways and methods. He talking about the Arctic who had never even smelt ice. I told him that he would find the Arctic different. The fool only laughed at me. Told me that I was an old croaker and that things had changed since my day.

"I warned him, 'wait until you've tried the ice, a howling norther, or been in pounding ice floes. The Arctic blizzards and a gale blowing you amidst the bergs. Then is the time you'll be likely to call on

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

your god and the god who made them engines.' He grinned.

"Finally we got to Dutch Harbour, in the Aleutian Archipeligo. Then the *Ketchikan* poked her iron bows into the Behring Sea, on her way to St. Michaels Island, Nome City and northern points. Here we met ice, and this was the first experience any of the officers or crew had of it. Little they knew of its powers or its terrors. It was muddy ice we saw, with the silt, mud and filth on it from the two thousand mile long Yukon River. This silt and mud fouled the brightly painted plates of *Ketchikan*, taking a lot of gilt off the gingerbread.

"Now the skipper, his officers and crew, including all the stewards, had their time occupied with the passengers as the weather got rough. The *Ketchikan* was a cranky bitch at the best of times, but in the shallow Behring Sea with its choppy cross-roll she got a shaking up which upset passengers and crew alike.

"One day I got a chance to put in a word of warning to the chief mate.

" 'Sir! I was ice-pilot on the *Bowhead*. We got badly nipped off the Diomedes.'

" 'Well, you had only auxiliary power on her. And little of that. This is a modern ship my man,' was his jeering answer.

"We dropped our mud-hook off Nome, and landed our passengers in the usual longshoremen's flat-bottomed boats, and then our freight into lighters alongside, wasting no time about it as bad

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

weather was brewing. Then we steamed for the North, passing Anvil Island and the Diomedes. We were to run to Point Barrow after Lisburne and Hope and there land some cargo and pick up a valuable load of furs and ivory.

"As we passed the Greater Diomede, the *Ketchikan* was given the signal for full power and kept at this until she had pushed her way past East Cape. I gulped down the Behring Sea fog with joy. What memories that brought back to me. I thought of the day when as a kid of eighteen, I had harpooned my first whale, and that a hundred miles north of Barrow. I remembered the time when I was only twenty-two, and standing in the bows of the whale-boat with my harpoon in my hand, watching for the whale to come up that had sounded. I suddenly saw it flashing up in the water from below, with its great mouth agape. It bit our boat in two in the centre, killing three of the crew and leaving me and the others in the water. Yes, that sniff of Behring Sea mist brought back the forgotten things of years long past.

"I sensed the whale-slick, ice, and coming of ice-floes. On the one side I could dimly see the drear tundras of the Alaskan coast. Some of the crew again started jeering me and calling me Granddad. So I went below. I had smelt the ice-fields. No one would listen to me when I spoke of danger. All I was told was of the wonders of steam.

"Bah! The fools! The blithering fools!

"That hayseed skipper with his greener officers

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

and crew of farm-hands were taking chances they didn't dream of. Soon there was much broken ice about, and dozens of ships, designed and built for the North had left their gaunt ribs upon that tundra and rocky shore, or gone down with all hands after being pierced by an ice-floe, as did the gold-laden ship the *Islander*, and that great ship in the Atlantic." (He was alluding to the *Titanic*.) "The *Islander* sank with all hands in ten minutes, and with £3,000,000 in gold-dust aboard. Yet she was a wooden-built ship.

"It was the season of the year for the worst kinds of winds and gales in those parts. The last part of August. I began to get nervous. Once again I spoke to the first mate. He cussed me.

"The *Ketchikan* ran into a huge field of floe-ice just past East Cape, then the skipper headed her across to Cape Lisburne and unloaded some stores there. Then we ran into real bad weather. Arctic weather, and more ice. I climbed up into the rigging and in the far north I caught the glint of ice-floes. That darned 'tin kettle' was surely out of place up there. The winter was closing in early that year. It all looked hostile. Gales were impending.

"Then we got it, just north of Cape Lisburne. All steam was crowded on. The wind was diabolical. Ice appeared as if by magic. The *Ketchikan* bucked the small ice, reached larger pans. A staggering shock almost tore her apart. Ice was everywhere, the wind had become a howling norther. A sound came like a great sigh uttered by a monumental

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

giant, and died away into silence. This came again, and then a sound from the wind as of a hundred express trains dashing through a tunnel.

"Through the deadly menace the *Ketchikan* dodged into an open lead between two large ice-fields. I climbed to the yards of the mainmast. The scene was terrible. Ice, ice and more ice, was all I could see, milling and churning; roaring like hundreds of canons. Wide pitching ice-fields lay all around us.

"Then came the bad part.

"I heard the chief engineer tell the skipper through the tube, that our oil tanks had been pierced from the outside and that they were gone. Next she ran her bows up on a great ice-field.

"They stopped her punctured plates with mattresses. But dozens of rivets had been sliced off below her water-line. She slid into another lead. Still floating but now leaking and stricken.

"Hand pumps were rigged. Her head was getting lower and lower. The engines ceased. The *Ketchikan* rolled until I thought that she would never right herself again. That night put terror into the hearts of all. They were getting a taste of Arctic weather. A fine thing to test their modern theories and ships against. It was enough to scare the stoutest. A howling wind whined overhead and icy seas swept our decks. The scuppers were full of ice and water, and the bows weighted down with the ice on the fo'c'sle head.

"Panic siezed those wharf-rats-who had jeered at

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

me. The *Ketchikan* had lost all way, the engines were silent. She just drifted among the pounding floes.

"Then the wind dropped suddenly. Field-ice was all round us. There was one open lead, and this a wide one. I fought my way to the bridge. To the skipper I said: 'I've sailed these seas for fifty years. You must get out by that lead or all hands and the ship are doomed. These fields will close and cut her open like a can-opener.'

"We burnt every blessed thing in her that would burn. Wood, bacon, fat, oil, mattresses, planks, crates, life-preservers. As we got clear of the lead it closed with the report of a thousand cannons. At last we sighted the Straits, slowly we got through, left them behind. And then we anchored behind Anvil Island, off Nome. I had conned the *Ketchikan* through the ice for three days without once closing my eyes. Me the old 'has been'.

"The day after we dropped anchor, the skipper sent for me and I went to his cabin. There he sat with the company's manager beside him.

" 'You're a seaman, Dad!' he said. 'An Arctic seaman, I take my hat off to you,'—and he did. 'What do you want? What can we and the company do for you? We'll give you most anything in reason.'

"I asked him for one of the ship's boats, loaded with stores from their Nome City warehouse.

" 'What for?' he asked.

"Well, cap'n, I know of an island. I'm going

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

there and if I can get there I'll die there. The North has been good enough for me all my life, it's good enough for me to die in, was what I told him. And that's how you come to find me here, lad. Here and happy. Here and here to stay till I die."

The old fellow went on to tell me that an escaped Russian prisoner had come to him just after the freeze-up. He was one of a party of five who had escaped from a prison camp in the interior. These five had found rich gold diggings and had started off with two sleds, one loaded with gold dust and the other with scanty supplies of food and a skin tent.

Terrible blizzards had swept the tundra plains. Some had been for throwing away the gold as being a hindrance, others were for leaving half the food. Then they had split into two parties for a day, but joined again. On they had trudged pulling their sleds behind them. A man would fall once, twice, a third time, only to lie there. Then the others would leave him. At last all the gold had been thrown away. The other four had all died of starvation. One large nugget was all the survivor had to show.

We spent two thoroughly enjoyable days with the fine old seaman and then took a hearty farewell of the old man who might never again see or speak to one of his own race and kind. Crossing back to the mainland and rounding Cape Oman, we came to a village just west of a long narrow promontory with high granite cliffs, which thrust themselves far

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

out into the Arctic Ocean. I received my first hostile welcome here. The women were a particularly poor lot ; I found that the whole community was under a number of strict taboos.

A walrus had been killed by a hunter far out on the ice-field. This was an almost unheard of thing to happen at that period of the year, hence the Angarkut had decreed that the hunter, and all who had assisted him to bring in the body of the walrus, should do no work of any kind for ten days. If they did, the soul of the walrus would be so offended that there would be bad hunting for the remainder of the year ; it would also bring death to the hunter and certainly bad luck to all the community.

Then the Angarkut had tabooed anyone in the community to use an edged tool or weapon, for this might have accidentally cut or wounded the soul of the walrus which would certainly be around the village for ten days ; they could not be too careful he had told them. All this they explained to me and that was the cause of their sullenness on our first arrival. A man had bitten a piece of the walrus meat with his front teeth, the meat had been held by his wife while he did this, the *in-nuk* or ghost of the walrus must have been near them, and accidentally hurt, for the man died that night in agony. So they had strangled the woman with a thong made from the hide of the walrus.

The dogs were also having a very thin time. It meant that they were practically living on nothing. Soon they had eaten every scrap of edible refuse

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

round the village. All the walrus meat was put up on high caches. The dogs sat under these, hungrily sniffing the air. Then they were fed meagre rations of frozen tom-cod.

Husbands and wives were also under a severe taboo. No man was permitted to have intercourse with any women for ten days. This was to show respect to the *in-nuk* of the walrus.

The hunter who had killed it was living in strict seclusion in a small snow igloo which he had built himself, and without the assistance of any female. He was unclean for ten days. When this time was over, he came out from the igloo, stood on its roof and chanted a long monologue in honour of the walrus' *in-nuk*.

CHAPTER TWELVE

JOURNEY IN A BLIZZARD—WE FIGHT THROUGH AND SPEND TWO DAYS IN A SNOW DRIFT—DANGERS FROM CREVASSES—CARIBOU AND THEIR MIGRATORY CUSTOMS—TABOOS—CARIBOU HUNTING—CANNIBALISM—I PULL THROUGH THE ICE—DRASTIC FIRST AID—DOGS IN MOCCASINS—WOMAN'S PART—DISASTER ON HONEY-MOON—SPRING IN THE ARCTIC—MOSQUITOS—STRANGE MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

AS we proceeded along the coast towards Cape North or Syeverni, I came on trails of teams and sleds. These were the trails which had been made by Tchuck-chis who were leaving their snow igloos on the shore or out on the field-ice for the low hills in the distance. On these they had their summer igloos, and there they would cache all their winter gear, clothing, sleds and stores of blubber and meat; then proceed inland after caribou. At this time of the year the tundra plains would be thick with vast herds migrating to the north and feeding on the succulent, greyish-moss of which they were so fond. One of the favourite grounds for them in this vicinity was at the mouth of the Amguema River, to the west of Cape Oman.

Though these trails were quite numerous, it was not until I came to a great land-locked lagoon that

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

I ran into any of these people. At the lagoon I came across a large encampment. Most of the women were fishing through holes which they had cut in the ice with their ice-knives and ice-pick. Once again I had come on signs showing how plentiful copper is in this Tom Tiddler's ground of mineral wealth. Their fishhooks were hammered out of native copper, but as usual with all Arctic races they had no barbs to them.

In most parts of Africa in which I have lived the natives understand the art of fishing with nets—that is excepting such fighting tribes as the Zulus, Matabele, Swazies and Masai and nomadic tribes. Though the natives of the Arctic shores are so dependent on fish, none of them, except those who are living cheek by jowl with whites, or who are visited regularly by whites, have the slightest idea of using a net.

I stayed one night with the people at the lagoon, as Stephan found that the next morning one of the men was starting for the mouth of the Amguema River. He was an expert caribou hunter and had received word that caribou were already grazing there.

The weather next morning was bad, and showed every indication that it would get worse before the day was out, however, as the hunter was starting with his sled, wife and two sons, I decided that I would travel with him. We made an early start, but within an hour the wind had become bad. By midday the full fury of the wind hit us as we

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

rounded a point. It was a real blizzard. I was soon sorry that I had not remained at the lagoon. The air which I tried to breath was literally nothing but a semisolid mass of untold billions of particles of fine snow, fine as the finest dust and sharp as freshly cut steel filings. This, blown by the furious wind formed a semi-opaque screen. This had a visibility which never exceeded that of the wheelers and at most times did not permit a view of even these.

The native went ahead, breaking trail for his team, a few steps behind him, and holding a safety line attached to his waist, came his wife, they were both using the long coast snow-shoe. Behind the squaw came his team, with one of his sons pulling on the sled with the dogs; at the handle-bars of his sled was his other son.

Then came Stephan breaking trail ahead of the first of my teams with his wife at the sled handle-bars; next came my partner, then came the second team with myself at the handle-bars of the sled. We changed this order repeatedly, for it was impossible for anyone to break trail for long; the breath was literally driven out of his body by the terrific force of the wind. Though each of us wore a safety line, there was the constant danger of a team getting lost.

At one of the change-overs I said to my partner: "We are in for about as bad a time as we have had yet. It is hell now and it is going to get worse."

It did. The noise of that howling Norther suddenly increased a hundredfold. It screamed

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

with the pandemonium of a hundred express trains. This ear-splitting sound was accompanied by a moving, but almost solid mass of compact snow and particles of ice. As this terrible hurricane swept along those shores of the Arctic Ocean, it actually forced us to the ground. For some time we were reduced to crawling on our hands and knees. To stop meant death and there was no place where we could take cover, such as a large snow-drift into which we might have dug. Each time I raised my face to the blizzard the terrible wind whipped particles of ice, and snow cut and seared any exposed part of my face like a shower of red-hot needles.

It was maddening. Frightening.

The air above and all round us seemed as if filled with a dull, mighty roar, as if the storm was confined in one great space. The sound being strangely muffled by the denseness of the masses of snow which the wind was carrying with it. This wind was coming directly from the north. From the Pole itself. It seemed to hit the gigantic cliffs on our left, only to rebound down on us with increased violence.

I have been in a tornado in Florida, bad storms in South Africa and what is called a 'Norther' in the Mexican Gulf. This was worse than all combined. It took every ounce of strength to combat and push forward in face of such terrific force, backed as it was by the awful cold and the matter carried by the wind. This at times seemed to sweep from every quarter at once into a whirling vortex of which

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

we and our teams seemed to be the pivot. At one moment the last breath in my body would seem to be squeezed or sucked from my tortured lungs, as if by some mighty vacuum cleaner, and in the next moment the frightening and terrible compression on my chest would cause me to gasp and fight to get a little air into my aching lungs.

The fine snow would beat under and even through the cover over my mouth, forcing its way down into my lungs as I gasped for breath, stinging them as if it were pepper. When it came to my turn to break trail ahead of the first team, I stumbled frequently, floundering about in my snow-shoes to try and keep my balance. It was only the great cliffs on my left which enabled me to keep my direction.

I kept one thought in my benumbed brain. I kept repeating over and over again to myself: "You must make the glacier which lays ahead."

At the foot of this we were to camp for the night. Here we knew that we should find a place to shelter. Soon the darkness added to our bewilderment. After travelling until late we reached the base of the hundred foot high glacier, where the cliffs terminated and the glacier ran to the tundra and joined with the shore ice.

All hands joined in turning a great snow-drift with a surface almost as hard as ice, into a dwelling which would house us for the night. Now, if never before we appreciated the double-sized sleeping bags which I had had made before we started out. The wind increased—if possible—to a screaming

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

hell as the night advanced. Day came at last with everything buried deep in a casing of drift-snow and ice. The fury of the wind abated a little, but there was still that blinding, stinging, drifting mixture of snow and ice driven before that 'White hell of the North'. It cut off all view from more than an arm's length distant. To think of travelling that day was courting death.

Our teams lay curled up and buried in the snow. Warm and snug under deep drifts, and they would only appear at feeding time; then only to gulp their food down as quickly as they could, and then dig themselves in once more in a snow-drift.

The second morning the wind had abated to a steady blow. I found that several of my dogs were in a poor condition. It looked serious, especially as we had to climb the glacier. To get the sleds going, one man was harnessed to each, and the man at the handle-bars did his best by pushing with all the strength he had. Then we started the stiff climb up the glacier which was at an angle of twenty degrees. About half-way up, the angle of incline increased so much that we were forced to double-up the teams; leaving one sled and returning for it after we had reached the top of the glacier. Finally I reached the summit with the last sled, and I'm sure that it was quite five hundred feet above the surface of the field-ice. By this time the gale had died down and we found that a mist gathered which soon covered the glacier. Luckily gusts of light winds kept it moving and lifting.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

If we had found the going hard and rough at the base of the cliffs and in getting up the incline, it was infinitely worse on the glacier's summit. Here the snow was in deep, hard ridges, and I dreaded the possibility of dangerous crevasses. All we could do was to push ahead and hope for the best.

Stephan was the unlucky man who fell in the first crevasse; he broke through a thin crust of frozen snow with a slight surface of ice. Luckily for him, as he felt the snow and ice giving way, he flung his arms wide apart, this kept the upper part of his body suspended over a deep abyss. He never lost his head, however, and soon we were able to throw him a line, succeeding after much hauling and struggling in extracting him from his perilous position.

Twice after this we had narrow escapes. Once I nearly lost a team and sled. There was nothing of any description to indicate the presence of a crevasse. Not even a depression in the snow.

By this time all the dogs had become very exhausted owing to the fact that we had been forced to cut down their rations; then again I had not been able to give them hot night meals at intervals. They were so weak that every man not breaking trail was forced to harness himself to a sled, and the man at the handle-bars worked as hard as any. It was gruelling work, hour after hour without any let-up, and on scanty meals. I was immensely thankful to find that the descent on the far side of the glacier was a long, gentle decline. Late at

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

night we made a few igloos at the mouth of the Amguema River. Here we found that in addition to the usual community, there were gathered quite a hundred natives from further along the coast.

The first day we saw few deer, not more than two or three. The second day they appeared in herds and we found no difficulty in killing all we needed with lances and the natives with bows and arrows.

These animals had migrated from the south, probably from as far away as the Kolimski Mountains, and before the following winter had arrived would again congregate in gigantic herds of several thousands and slowly make their way to the south again. On their migration from the warmer lands to the south, they seem as if they have the urge to make for the fields of sea-ice and to travel for miles out on it. As far as I could observe there was no method or reason for this. They would travel steadily from the tundra plains, passing the richest and most succulent patches of moss, and keep going for until they came to the ice at the shore then without even pausing, they would walk out onto it, keep going for several miles, even when the ice was mushy and honeycombed, then when a considerable distance from the shore, they would lay down on the ice and often pass the first night there.

I found that all these animals migrating from the south were in the poorest possible condition. This seemed to me to show that the Arctic tundra-moss,

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

which they like so much, must have been more plentiful and more nourishing than the feed they got in the south. The animals in these herds had skins which were quite useless and worthless. The hair of all of them was loose and falling out, and their backs were full of holes all the way from the size of a small pea to as large as a five shilling piece. These were caused by the large grubs which infest them as spring draws near; the same grubs which I had offered me black and frozen.

At this large camp there was a noted shaman from a village as far away as Cape Billingsa, which lies almost opposite the most western end of Wrangel Island; this man had a lot to say and tell about the rites and taboos connected with the hunting and killing of *tuk-too*, the caribou.

He had the theory—it was certainty with him—that every migration and every large herd was under the will and absolute control of a great spirit which had its abode in the Far, Far North. This great spirit, according to him, was continually travelling about the north and used the body of *nan-nook*, the great white bear, for this purpose. According to him, this great spirit calls back to it the spirit of every deer killed by a man. Then the spirit of the deer tells to this ruling spirit residing in *nan-nook*, the story of how it came to be killed. The tale is carefully considered and if the hunter has killed him and used the correct rites and minded the taboos, then the deer will be sent back to be killed again and again.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

This great Angarkut—shaman—was able to talk to the Great Reindeer Spirit and persuade it to cause the herds to return each year; but this could only be done if all the peoples had observed every taboo connected with *tuk-too*. For instance it was strictly taboo for dogs to hunt fawns which were only a few weeks old. Taboo for dogs to be given any deer meat, except when it was extremely plentiful, and under no circumstances were dogs allowed to gnaw deer legs, these must be burnt.

One of the taboos which struck me as the most peculiar of all was that whilst hunting the caribou, or using its flesh, skin or any other part of the animal, neither the hunter nor his wife were permitted to touch anything belonging to a seal. This was a most strict taboo. No clothing made from seal skins was worn, no seal muk-luks, no ky-aks were mended ready for the spring-hunting on the ice-fields, and all weapons had heads which had been lashed on with caribou-hide thongs. All fishing ceased and certain natives from the interior even went so far as to stop eating fish.

Almost every night there were dances of one kind or another. The Angarkut gave the most impressive dances of them all. His were all done with masks on, and were to propitiate the Great Reindeer Spirit and also to insure that the hunting would be good. He really was wonderfully good in some of his dances; far from being ludicrous, they were impressive and done with great care to details.

The dances done by the hunters were imitations of

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

different animals such as the fox, wolf, seal, and walrus and the dances done by the women were to insure fertility among the animals and virility among the males.

One thing struck me as strange at this meeting, this was the fact that I met several natives who had never tasted tea, and several who had never seen a white man before. These last were natives who came from far north of the New Siberian Islands. I made two or three brews of tea and gave it to these people, and it was curious to watch the looks on their faces as they sipped the steaming brew, and tasted it for the first time. I could not understand this strangeness of tea to them, as the Russians have been using it in parts of Siberia for three hundred years.

It was whilst in this area that I continually heard of cases of cannibalism. During my travels on five continents, I have come across cannibalism and would put this act under three headings: religious rites, liking for the taste of human flesh, and the result of starvation. Religious rites mainly among the negroid races, such as ju-ju and voodooism in West Africa and Haiti; liking for human flesh as in New Guinea—long-pig; and starvation, as in the Arctic.

These people made no attempt to deny the fact that when driven to it they would not scruple to eat one another. I heard of one instance of a party of eight hunters who had gone far out on the broken spring-ice after walrus. They had been unsuccessful and ventured farther and farther out on the great

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

floes. It was one of the 'bad years', and the mighty brutes were scarce. The hunting party got neither walrus nor seal. Bad weather came up. They were storm-bound. The last scrap of food was eaten. One by one hunters died and as they died *they were eaten by the others*. Only three men survived out of that party. One was present at the great camp, and he was not treated in any way differently to others.

Mr. Bilby, a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society, and a great Arctic traveller, tells in one of his books, of a party in similar straits in the lands north of Canada. With this party there was a woman with her child of four or five. This child was killed and eaten and was the means of saving the lives of the remainder of the party.

I never heard of an act of cannibalism taking place except when there was a total absence of seal, walrus and whale. Yet, knowing as they do, that there is always the chance of this occurring, the natives never showed any inclination to save and store food, which can be done so easily in the Arctic, where the ground is never thawed out for more than two feet from the surface and where ice can always be had. I have many times dug through the tundra for two feet and come on glacial ice underneath. On one claim which I worked on the Koy-u-kuk River, I came on glacial ice at a depth of forty feet. There is this to be said for the Eskimos in general. Though they can beat almost any man in the amount of food they are able to consume at

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

one meal, given the supply; when it comes to the pinch they can live longer on starvation rations than any race.

I have many times seen men of my own, who have worked for me for long periods, men like Stephan or Nar-gar-chuk, eat a meal of beans and bacon and a large amount of flap-jacks, equal to three times what I would eat; then get up, go across to the other side of the igloo and sit down with the natives and consume an equal amount of blubber and raw meat, plus a few snacks such as frozen tom-cod.

Continuing our journey and skirting the shore to Cape North—Syeaverni—we made a portage over the base of the Cape. There is a small river on both sides of Cape North and I finally made a camp on the west side. Here the tundra ended at the ice edge in a twenty feet high bank. My route now lay across a chain of lagoons, divided from the sea-ice by a ridge of sandy soil fifty yards wide and ten feet above sea level.

The following day I once more took to the sea-ice, which had now begun to break up with great leads in it miles in length and often from several yards to a hundred yards in width. In many instances the mush between these leads would freeze over night, making them look perfectly safe for travel. Now it is a curious fact, and one which the Arctic traveller must take care to remember, that though fresh water ice of three to four inches thick, will support a loaded sled when moving, it is necessary for sea-ice, formed of slush and snow, to be

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

frozen to a depth of at least two feet to support the same weight. This is due to the fact of there being so much salt in the sea-ice.

It was one of the Arctic's glorious days. The glass was only four degrees below zero and there was a brilliant sun shining. The night before, the glass had been down to ten. Travel had been fine at the beginning of the day—we had started out at five o'clock and in broad daylight. By midday the surface of the ice was soggy, and Stephan had suggested that we make for the shore and anchored-ice as he felt that some of the frozen leads we had crossed had begun to get dangerous. We were making for the shore at a fast dog-trot. I was urging my team and calling to my leader, the sled being loaded with quite eight hundred pounds of meat; the surface of the ice became worse and worse as the heat of the sun bit into it. This was the time when we were having twenty hours of daylight and the sun was gaining strength each day.

Suddenly I noticed the ice I was on, bend at the sled-front, then almost at that very second, the rear end broke through and instantly I was up to my arm-pits in icy water. Stephan and my partner who were behind me with the other sled soon had me out and on firm ice. I ran like mad for the shore. This kept my blood in circulation, but I knew that I was in considerable danger. I soon felt my clothes freezing on me and it was not long before they were solid ice. My parka, trousers and mukluks being as hard as iron. Almost exhausted, I got

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

to the shore and into an igloo, and there the natives immediately came to my assistance.

Their treatment was painful, but effective.

My rapid run from the ice-field to the shore, and up the steep bank to the four igloos on its summit, added to the warmth of the atmosphere there, had all helped to warm my blood as well as to somewhat partially thaw my mail-like furs. Hastily the squaws and men pulled these off me, stripping me to the buff. I was laid on a large sealskin on the igloo floor and then rubbed and rubbed with dry snow. This went on for some time, and then the frozen places were rubbed with slush snow. Men and squaws worked on me in relays; then I was rubbed with blubber until I was in a glow from head to feet. Stephan then made me a brew of scalding tea and rolling up in a squirrel robe I tucked into my sleeping bag.

Thanks to this treatment, the next day I was as well as if nothing had ever taken place though I dreaded being laid up. Had I been farther out on the ice, say a few more miles further from the shore, or had Stephan and our native guide not known where the igloos were situated, there is no doubt that I should have frozen to death.

We were now at the period of the year when travelling is so hard on the dogs' feet, unless of course a man puts moccasins on them. This period is the months of April, May and June. Then the hot sun, in the middle of the day, from periods varying from one hour to three hours, will cause the snow to

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

melt on the surface. This leaves thousands of icy points sticking up, and these freeze again as the sun looses its strength. These icy points, sharp as the points of tin-tacks, pierce the tender skin between the toes of the dogs, and at the end of the second day of travelling their feet will be bleeding. In addition to the constant pricking of the icy-needles, the dogs suffer from pieces of ice forming between the toes. To remove these the dog, while working in his harness, and running along, will endeavour to tear this ice out with his teeth. It is not long before a dog has bitten pieces of the tender skin between his toes and made bleeding, raw places. Moccasins prevent all this but even these must be seen to constantly and repaired every night.

Here is where a squaw comes in so useful in making a long journey such as we were making. Women in civilization say that their work is never done. Well Stephan's wife would travel with us all day, in all weathers, take her turn at breaking trail ahead of the dogs, come into the igloo or camp with us, help at the meal, and then often sit up until far into the night mending and making gear—furs, moccasins, lashings and other things needed for the trail. That little woman was a marvel, she had the guts and sheer grit of ten ordinary white men. She never grumbled, never complained, never shirked and was always cheerful. "For all her dusky hide, she was white, sheer white inside," and the best partner and helper a man could want on a tough trail.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

As soon as we had finished our last meal, she had a certain set rule from which she never deviated. The harness would have been brought in before we cooked the dinner. This gave it the chance to thaw out, and get lissom again, by the next morning it would usually have dried. The meal finished, the squaw would look it over and see if any part of it needed attention. Then she would take each moccasin, repair it if needed, and see that they were set to dry. Then she saw that each of our mukluks had the damp hay taken out, and that they were hung up to dry—soles up. Should they need any repairing, this would be done. Then, long after I had gone to sleep, I would wake up to find her industriously mending her husbands clothes, these always came last and received the most minute care.

Five days of uneventful—so comfortable—travel brought us to Cape Jakan, and we were well abreast of Wrangel Island. The field-ice had now begun to get soft for three or four hours each day, then the surface would get mushy and lakes of water could be seen in many places on the ice. Far out at sea it was beginning to get unstable, with leads—large and small—opening in all directions. Soon the largest of these would be used by the whales cruising up them after sea-lice, and by the great walrus crawling out from them to bask on the ice.

We now travelled longer hours each day, though I found that it paid me to rest for a couple of hours in the middle of the day. I now broke camp as early as four in the morning, then travelled until

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

the sun had thawed out the surface, this would be by about eleven, had lunch and rested the team, and then on again from two until six or seven at night.

At a village twenty miles east of Cape Jakan, I heard a pitiful tale of disaster. A young hunter who had recently taken a squaw of fifteen as his wife, had been burning to distinguish himself as a hunter. He had boasted that he would secure the first walrus of the season. For some weeks he had been successful at seal hunting, securing four in one week by the 'waiting method'. Then he proceeded far out on the broken field-ice with his wife. He had with him his sled and a team of five dogs. On his sled was loaded his single seater ky-ak. Getting on to the main field which had broken away, he built himself a small snow—hunting—igloo close to one of the greater leads, a dangerous thing to do at that time of the year when the great spring storms were due. The weather had been fine, and though remonstrated with by some of the elders, off he went with his wife.

They built their igloo, and then on the third day, just after he had killed a large leopard seal, the weather suddenly changed. In a few minutes the sky became black with clouds which banked up driven by a wind which increased in violence every minute. Then came an ominous booming roar from the north. In less than an hour this had increased to a terrific gale, and the wind now shook the igloo, threatening every minute to destroy it. This kept

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

them busy repairing it, as holes appeared in its walls. The ice-field shook and reverberated with the pounding of the massive floes against it miles away to the north.

At times tremendous roars were heard. This was caused by great floes breaking away, floes twenty feet thick and a mile or two square. They dared not leave now, so both tried to sleep. The dogs in the igloo with them shivered with fright. This at last frightened the young squaw, who urged her husband to try and make for the shore. Now the floe on which their igloo stood was heaving like the deck of a small ship. Even as the hunter decided to try and make for the shore, their igloo shivered, the wall of the igloo split at the moment the floor opened beneath them, most of their equipment disappearing into the water.

Death faced them both.

It was pitch dark, the Norther howled, the noise of the pounding pans and floes was deafening. It was a night of chaos, pandemonium and terror.

The two headed for the shore in that inky, hellish night; racing over the floes and jumping across leads. On they went from floe to floe, from floes to pans; jumping, hopping, falling, yet always helping each other. The squaw at last fell and must have broken her ankle or seriously twisted it. She could only hobble on one leg after. Her husband put one arm around her and they started off once more on that terrible journey. The roar of the crashing floes was deafening and they could only

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

make signs to each other to make themselves understood, even shouting in each others ears was quite useless. In less than another hundred yards the young squaw—now wet to the skin and with her furs freezing on her, frightened, bewildered and exhausted by her exertions and the weight of ice on her parka—fell to the ice and was unable to rise to her feet again. She was all-in.

She told her husband to go on and leave her.

Bending down, he lifted her and threw her over his shoulder, refusing to leave her or to give up the fight. Wet through as his wife was, with an equal weight of frozen water hanging to his furs, on he went with his burden, jumping from rocking floes and from tossing pan to pan. He jumped to one pan, missed his step or calculation, his foot slipped, and he flung himself forward on to the rocking pan of ice.

His wife was in the water. He seized her parka as she was sinking and hauled her out on to the small pan on which he stood, and which was now awash with sea water. Again he threw her over his shoulder and now weaker himself, started for the anchored shore-ice.

Twice more he fell with her, and at last reached the igloos, but then he was carrying a dead woman whose body and furs were one solid block of ice. *She was frozen fast and solidly to her husband.* The men and squaws in the igloo had to use ice-knives to cut them apart. The hunter's face, arms, shoulders and back were black with frost.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Yet he lived to tell the tale. A splendid instance of the heroism and hardihood of the Eskimos.

And now the Arctic tundra, with its great muskegs and weather-beaten plains was beginning to yield to the spring sun as it got hotter and hotter each midday. Much of the snow was beginning to disappear. The hot, midday sun with its fervent heat and penetrating warmth that broke the frost in the mosses and lichens, loosened the frost in the ground and ate its way into the earth.

At this period, for two hours each day the surface of the tundra plains was dissolving into innumerable tiny rivulets, slowly displaying Arctic grasses and mosses and preparing the plains for the tiny devils of the North, the fiends who would soon come in their billions, making the Arctic summer a hell.

Mosquitos.

In May, June, July and August the air is so thick with them that even the caribou go mad with their continual biting and stinging. Then the deer, in their maddened frenzy, will race until they can run no more, until exhausted, they will stand and tremble.

Their ears, nostrils, eyes, lips and even legs would be red with blood drawn by the small, singing, stinging, devils that never cease their torture for one single second.

I have even seen black bears standing in the water to get away from the buzzing pests who only disappear when the cold of the spring evening arrives; but through the summer rest neither night nor day.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

The people I was with at this time had certain peculiar customs for their women at the time of childbirth. This differed from the custom of most other Eskimos I had met in either Alaska or Siberia. When a girl was pregnant, and up to the time of the birth of her child, she had every possible attention paid to her by the other women of the community; but especially by any other women in the igloo in which she resided.

After the birth of her first baby, however, she had the second alone, in a small igloo which she was forced to build herself a good mile or more from the community. Here she gave birth to her child alone, and without the slightest assistance from anyone. Her food was brought to her by a woman who had to feed her, for it was known to all, that had the expectant mother done this herself, she might accidentally have allowed an evil spirit to enter into her mouth as she put the food in with her own hand.

Here again I ran across the problem of barren women. Here, when a woman had lived with her husband for two winters and two summers and showed no sign of pregnancy, she had recourse to the Angarkut. He would have the igloo cleared of all except the woman. Then he would go through his incantations, conjuring up of spirits and end by having intercourse with the woman. Should this not have the desired effect, the woman was looked upon as barren, scorned by her sisters and probably divorced by her husband. Though there were

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

certain cases spoken of in which the woman had been sold to a man in another community.

Here I attended my first organized walrus hunt. There were eight in the party and we went far out on the broken field-ice, making our camp approximately forty miles from the shore. We built a snow wall five feet high as a windbrake, sleeping in our clothes and in our sleeping bags or rolled up in robes. The second night out on the floe we were all kept awake by a sound like tremendous dynamite explosions in the distance, many miles to the north and about midnight we could feel the ice trembling.

Then one of the natives went out scouting and returned to say that the field was breaking up in all directions and that there were many great leads all round us as well as dozens of small ones. Not having an oomiak with us, it was decided that we should return to the shore, for the ice was rotten and in such a bad state that it was not safe to remain where we were without a boat. Snow started to fall, covering slush and sound ice alike with a thick eerie mantle, that deceived me and even the natives as to the extent of its dangerous condition. This nearly caused disaster.

It was soon evident that a broad belt of almost impassable broken ice, cut us off from direct return to the shore-point from where we had started, and that we should have to make a detour.

We pushed on at a fast pace, for an offshore wind might have meant the ice going out for a day or two and that was something none of us wanted. On and

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

on we drove the dogs and at last we got close to and under the great cliffs at Cape Kerporki. We were now on anchored ice and had to make preparations for camping for the night. It was a good fifteen miles along the shore to the villages with hummocky ice all the way. We camped as best we could, all our clothing and kit being wet through, but I slept the sleep of utter exhaustion—wet though I was to my skin—and never caught cold nor pneumonia; they do not exist in the Arctic beyond the limits of civilized man, and when living and eating as a native does.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

A WALRUS HUNT—RAW NATURE AT WAR—A NIGHT-
MARE RETURN—THE THANKSGIVING DANCES—A
WALRUS FIGHT TO THE DEATH

PLANS were immediately made for another walrus hunt as many of the great beasts had been seen far out on the ice and in several cases bulls had been reported as being with their harems. This time the hunt was to be on a larger scale and with an oomiak taken out by dog sled. It is in the early spring that the walrus bull is really dangerous and an intrepid fighter, for then he has his harem to guard and protect; this makes him particularly jealous and he gets angry if anyone even approaches within calling distance. He will now be in his most ferocious mood and as jealous as a youngster over his first sweetheart. He will charge and attack anything and never reckon on the consequences.

The largest of the bulls will run to as much as three tons in weight, and he will have tusks of from three to four feet long. The average weight, however, is two thousand pounds. When a walrus can be hunted on a large ice-field or even a large floe, he is about as easy to kill as a cow, but when near a lead or when hunted from an oomiak and in open

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

water, he is about as dangerous as a wounded lioness. Then he is in his element, and heaven help the hunter with his ky-ak or the hunters in the oomiak if he gets his tusks into the boat. His is then one or two tons of devilish fury.

The hunter sets out after him in his ky-ak with his long bear-lance laid along one side of the ky-ak, and his largest harpoon on the other side. To the detachable head of the harpoon—made of ivory—is attached a twenty foot line of thick, tough, but pliable raw-hide, and at the end of this an inflated seal skin. (Incidentally this will have been blown out by the man's lungs.) This line and float will not only prevent the walrus from diving to any great depth, but also retard his movements when attacking the hunter or his ky-ak.

The hunter in his ky-ak—the most silent of crafts to operate, and one of the most difficult for a white man to learn to handle—which the slightest touch of his double-bladed paddle will send in any direction; manœuvres to approach the walrus from behind, plunging the harpoon into the animal at the base of its head, where it joins the neck. Skilful hunters, however, and men with plenty of nerve will drive their frail skin boats right towards the mighty beast from the front, who then, seeing the ky-ak approach, with a bellow of rage, charges towards the ky-ak at the pace of a fast boat, his head and shoulders being forced clear of the water—a vision of bestial rage. His great tusks dripping water and saliva, his large, red eyes, sparking fire

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

and hate. Then the hunter in his frail craft needs every atom of courage and skill that he has at his command. He must remember that this great beast, fast though it may be in the water when charging ahead, cannot turn one tenth as quickly as his ky-ak, and that there lays his great advantage.

No automatic rifle is at his hand, throwing ten 45.90 bullets in fifteen seconds, each one capable of smashing its way through to some vital part of the charging and gigantic beast. Here is primitive man, using the same methods, and the same identical weapons he used more than two thousand years ago. Just a harpoon, tipped with ivory, backed by the coolest and most sublime courage. Middens have been excavated on Lawrence Island and other parts which show that these weapons were used as long ago as five thousand years. It must also be remembered to the credit of these brave hunters, that no Eskimo has any idea of swimming and that even if he were able to do so, the terrible cold of the Arctic Seas would soon freeze him.

Watching every movement of his giant prey—a true survival of the stone age—the hunter sits in his ky-ak, harpoon poised in his hand, waiting for the walrus to get to just within the correct distance, then with a touch of the paddle, he causes his ky-ak to slip aside and at the same moment he plunges the harpoon with all his strength deep into the oncoming beast.

In a second the great brute dives, sending enormous showers of water up into the air, and

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

making great waves which requires all the skill of the hunter to save the ky-ak from upsetting. When the animal dives his intention is to come up again alongside the ky-ak and smash it with his great tusks. The drag, however, of the large inflated seal-skin makes him misjudge its distance; all the time the hunter has kept track of it under water by the rising air bubbles.

Now, when its head appears, the hunter attacks it from behind, jabbing his long bear-lance again and again into the neck of the infuriated beast, in an effort to sever the arteries there. Once more the walrus will dive, but this time will come to the surface quicker than before. This will go on for perhaps half an hour, until the hunter finishes him.

The reverse side—and a quite frequent one—is when the hunter misses the animal with his harpoon, when the harpoon does not stay in the animal, or when the walrus has such great momentum that he is able to surge against and overturn the ky-ak. Then the great beast rends the ky-ak with its tusks, afterwards going for the hunter and plunging his tusks into him again and again, until the hunter's body is only a mangled mass of flesh, bone and fur parka. If he is attacked by other ky-aks when doing this, he will seize hold of his victim and submerge with him.

At last we went out on the most northerly edge of the great field and here we built a hunting igloo on a place where we thought that the ice was particularly thick and where it was not likely to split into a lead.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Also where the snow was very thick and well packed, with an ice-hardened surface. Inside of four hours we had an igloo built which would house our party and against the igloo we built a small shelter for the dogs. Of course a properly constructed snow igloo is round, but owing to the shortage of snow, this one was built with four walls; it was three feet wide and twelve feet long. This enabled us to put skins across the walls to form a roof. Each man in the party was wearing two fur parkas, trousers of bear skin, fur mitts and fur muk-luks with waterproof ones over them.

The following day patrols of single natives were sent out along the edge of the great field and along one great lead which was close to our camp. These patrols did half a day each, and they were not only forced to be constantly on the move, but eternally vigilant. Inside of an hour of the first patrol leaving, he returned with word of a bull walrus with his harem of three cows.

My partner and I had brought our rifles with us, though we had no ammunition to waste. We now proceeded to stalk these animals, and as the ice in their vicinity was badly broken and with ridges and hummocks, we were able to get to within fifty yards of them. We killed the bull and one of the cows, but it was some time before I was convinced that the bull was actually dead. We had both fired at him on my giving the word. We saw him give a start as the bullets smashed into him, then he slowly lowered his head until it was supported by his

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

great tusks on the ice-field. The cows hesitated long enough after we had fired, to enable us to kill one of them before they plunged into the water. I sat and watched the bull for several minutes before deciding that he was dead, though my partner laughed at me for my cautiousness.

It seemed to him—perhaps to others—that I was either timid or over cautious, but Arctic animals are uncanny things. I think that they have more vitality than those living in warmer climates. ‘All is not gold that glitters’, and all Arctic animals are not dead that seem to be, and that should be by the standards of other animals.

I knew one white man who with his schooner, had made a good living for years, hunting walrus for their ivory and blubber. This man made a great kill one day of several walrus out on a large field. He was amongst his dead game, when suddenly one arose when he had his back to it, active as any cat, and pinned him in the back with his tusks, then dived into a nearby lead. The man was killed instantly.

Being over brave, a damned dare-devil or a chance-taking fool—they are all the same—does not pay in the Arctic. Foolhardy stunts with either the weather or animals do not pay. There is bound to be a day when the man who does this loses out.

When these two walrus were killed, we did not waste a minute in beginning to cut them up, and whilst this was being done, a messenger was sent to the shore to tell all the community to come out

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

with every sled there. In two days every pound of the great brutes had been sent to the shore, and the dogs were surfeited with scraps and blood, and now we moved our camp and built another igloo ten miles farther to the east. The same night that we had finished it, we heard thunderous reports. The ice was breaking up at a place some miles away. This noise went on all through that night and at times we felt the field shiver. That day a blinding snow storm started and kept up until it was midnight—and only dusk at that time of the year. It was decided to make for the shore there and then, as the wind was rising. Loading up the two sleds and abandoning the oomiak we had brought out with us, we started for the shore. Soon we were stopped by a great *chevaux de frise* of ice-pans, wedged, up-ended and tossed about by the immense pressure of the great ice-fields, until the pans and floes had formed a ridge twenty-five to fifty feet high, and running parallel with the shore. We sent a scout in either direction, but they returned to report that it continued for as far as they could see.

There were places in the ridge which were lower than others and I could see that we should be forced to hack a road through at one of these low parts. We made a camp at what looked a likely place and then set to work.

And the wind increased in velocity.

The glass fell to a deadly cold.

My partner got one foot badly frozen, Stephan had three fingers on his right hand frozen and one

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

of the natives had a foot frozen to the ankle—he had got this wet—and our road making went very slowly ahead, while all the time we were urged on by hearing the dull, booming reports out to sea, caused by great pieces of the field breaking away. It was deadly, terrifyingly cold and cheerless, never-ending work, for though we made an incline at an angle of thirty degrees, every foot had to be smoothed out to get the dogs and sleds up it. Then a scout came in. He was in a pitiable condition. Wet to the waist, and with both legs frozen to the knees. He had twice stepped through snow into water which lay underneath. We did what we could for him, which was little, and he died a few hours after arriving at the camp. Practically frozen up to his waist into a solid block.

By the next morning we had crossed the ridge—and the storm had increased. It looked to me as if another ridge might form between us and the shore, as we could see the storm forcing small pans and floes against the shore and anchored-ice, causing the smaller pieces of ice to slide up and over the still ice. Here it was a case of stupendous and irresistible force meeting an irresistible and solid body.

The going was not bad, it was damnable. We made less than half a mile an hour and the dogs were almost worn out. Their moccasins had been cut through by the ice, and many of them were suffering from bleeding pads which had been cut to the bone. At times we came to places which were so

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

rough that with all the dogs harnessed to a sled, and every man pulling, it was all we could do to get the sled moved at all.

I began to think that we were all doomed. The gale was now blowing off shore and the ice-field shuddering continuously as it broke up into small floes and pans. The race for the shore seemed to be an endless series of races to get across narrow leads before they got too wide to cross. Time and again we would come to a wide lead and be forced to send scouts to either side to find a place narrow enough to get the sleds across. And all the time the devilish gale, tormented and plagued us by driving, cutting, biting snow-drift in our faces.

Twice we were forced to make bridges of the sleds and get the frightened dogs to run across on them. Three times we rafted the party across leads on small pans. The fourth day found us starting out in a howling gale and a driving blizzard. Again and again we came to open water. Sleds broke through slush-ice, dogs got wet through, and then their feet froze. Some became so weak they could only be got to walk by allowing them to follow out of their traces.

At last it was brought home to us that we were adrift on moving ice. The dogs were in a panicky state. Once one team got away and bolted, only to stop at the edge of the ice, trembling as they looked at the water.

Then we had our first piece of luck, the wind changed and the snow stopped. Going became good

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

and after two patches of bad ice we came to one great field of ice as smooth as a table, this reached right to the anchored shore-ice. Gosh! That was certainly a relief. The dogs, however, were in a terrible condition. That night we made an igloo on the shore and all night heard the ice grinding, groaning, breaking and smashing in all directions. The following day we were back at the igloos from which we had started.

The following night the sound of a drum being beaten slowly and deliberately, could be heard by all. It was coming from the ka-jim and soon we all made our way there. Every man, woman and child in the village was there. It was a kind of thanksgiving celebration—for the two walrus and for our safe return—with the Angarkut acting as the archbishop. Except for a small space in the centre, the place was packed. Many lamps (stone) gave plenty of light and made the place intolerably hot. All were stripped to the waist.

Tum, tum, tum, tum, tum.

The beat of the drums throbbed.

All were wedged around in a tightly packed circle, the inner row of the audience being composed of the men. On the ledge-platform sat the orchestra. Four men, each with a drum made from baby seal-skin or walrus' stomach, stretched over hoops. These were beaten by the heel of the hand or with ivory sticks twelve inches long and with small ivory knobs on the ends, much like the sticks used by our drummers.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Tum, tum, tum, tum, tum.

I had heard the sound in the African jungle, on the high veldt, in Zulu kraals, in Central Africa and Central America, and when that drumming is done with the needful skill it can drive a man frantic.

Tum, tum, tum, tum, tum.

The leader increased his tempo. Shorter and harder strokes. The others took up the time. Making a veritable thunder in the ka-jim. The men get restless. The women shake their breasts.

A fat man, naked to the waist, jumps into the centre of the ring and begins the 'dance of the louse'. He soon has the audience shrieking with uncontrollable laughter as in a pantomime dance, with never a word uttered, he squirms and wriggles; scratches his back, his belly, hunts the enemy under his arm-pits, his feet never still, pursues the enemy to other unmentionable parts of his anatomy, and finally captures the elusive insect up his nose. He has brought down the house. The mirth-loving Eskimos shout and roar with amusement at the antics of this George Robey of the Arctic.

Tum, tum, tum, boom, boom, boom.

The drums are getting louder and louder.

Then comes the sensual and sexual dance of Nan-nook, the bear.

Tum, tum, tum, tum.

Stephan has been overcome by the sound. He jumps into the circle. His face transformed. All his mission teaching forgotten.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Boom, boom, boom, boom.

The drums have got into his bones. His blood is answering to the age-old call.

Stephan begins to chant a long monologue which tells of his fight with the polar bear. Strutting about, recounting how the risks he took. How he fired again and again. How the bear nearly got him. How he was never afraid. Then he told of the kill.

Tum, boom, tum, boom.

A young hunter bounds into the circle. His eyes are like coals of fire. Passion has got him. Words are welling upwards to his mouth but he cannot find expression. His feet, lips and the muscles of his face twitch. He starts jumping and prancing. Then he starts to tell of his last seal hunt. Afloat on an ice-floe. His two comrades dead. Driven out to sea. Alone, starving, almost dead. He tells how the wind changed. His good spirit comes to his help. The ice drifts back towards the shore. Again his good spirit helps him. He spears a small seal. Sucks its blood and eats its flesh and blubber—raw. He is revived.

Tum, tum, tum, tum.

The drums increase their time. Keeping pace with the words which now pour in an excited stream from his mouth.

He stands and points to the woman he desires. Tells her that she is his woman.

His eyes glint with anticipation.

He sings of the mating season for walrus, the rutting season for deer; tells of the bearing of

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

young by all the things of the wild. He says that animals and men must have their female mates. That females must bring forth young to replace those that die or are killed. Again he points to the woman of his choice. Tells of the roundness and plumpness of her breasts. Likens them to the udders of a young doe. Tells of how he will hunt and fight for her. That he will be to her as a bull walrus to his harem.

Then he bounds to her side.

Tum, tum, tum, tum.

I have now joined the orchestra and am trying my skill with the smallest of the three drums.

A shaman now does the seal dance. He flops about the floor, imitating the movements of a seal basking in the sun on a floe. Soon he is joined by a young shaman—a disciple. They do the dance of a spirit seal.

* * * * *

A few days after this I had climbed a small cliff overlooking a tiny cove and witnessed the fight of two bull walrus over the harem of the older. It was now the time of the year when their mating season was on and the mating urge was making them into maddened fighters.

There must have been fifteen of these magnificent beasts on the small, ice-bound beach, with a lead of open water running far out through the field-ice and

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

with many open spaces of clear water within easy reach of where they were basking. From my position on the cliff, sixty or seventy feet above them, I stood and watched the spectacle, fascinated at the sight of the splendid beasts, monarchs of the water, whom even Nan-nook does not often dare to attack.

The Eskimos claim that Nan-nook will take the opportunity to get in just such a position as I was in then, and loosen great boulders so that they will drop on the walrus and maim them, then he will attack and finish the wounded animal. An Eskimo legend in which—considering the cunning of the bear—there may be an atom of truth.

I saw one great, old patriarch, his massive shoulders scored again and again with wounds received from tusks of his enemies in previous fights to maintain his supremacy, and over-lordship of the herd of which he was the head.

What a splendid beast he was, bigger by far than any of the others, with magnificent tusks and looking the image of Bairnsfather's 'Old Bill'.

Then there came from the open lead the head of a splendid young bull. He swam to the ice, hooked his tusks on it and drew himself out of the water. Giving a bellow of what might have been a greeting or a challenge, he made his way to where the herd lay. He stopped when close to them, looked round and then deliberately made his way to where 'Old Bill's' harem of five cows lay clustered together, some twenty yards distant from where their lord

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

lay basking in the sun but keeping a watch on them out of the corner of his wicked old eyes.

The cows eyed the newcomer, then looked at their lord. It was really comical. The eternal female, only in gigantic forms. Their look as much as said: "If only the old fool were out of the way, what a game we could have with this young upstart."

Now when another bull, and especially a younger one looking to win a harem by a fight, comes too close to the harem of another, that bull will warn him by a bellow of rage and a shake of his head and massive tusks.

This young bull's whiskers bristled, his neck swelled until it was nearly twice its normal size. He bellowed, snorted and roared his challenges.

'Old Bill' raised his great head and answered in like manner, drowning the efforts of the youngster.

The cows moved off, stopped, rounded and settled down to watch the proceedings from the distance.

There was a battle ahead. The Arctic's real devil—a giant raven—lighted on a nearby rock, so that he could watch the coming fight to the death. The age-old, familiar struggle in the animal world and the world of humans—males fighting for the favour of females—was about to take place in that silent Arctic cove.

This had to be fought out. If 'Old Bill' lost, it meant his being driven from the herd. There was no half-way measure.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

Slowly the old patriarch approached the cocksure young challenger. 'Old Bill', with his fine, four foot tusks weighing quite fifteen pounds each; the challenger had tusks of only half this weight and length but each of them thinner and more pointed.

The youngster bellowed and roared, working himself into a first-class rage. Suddenly he plunged forward straight at 'Old Bill'. A quick slashing move with his tusks, ripped the old fellow's side, giving him a slight wound. But the old patriarch had been almost as quick as the youngster and managed to get his great tusks into the shoulder of his attacker, making two gaping wounds in the soft, giving flesh at the shoulder.

Like a flash, 'Old Bill' launched himself, slashing the young bull's side with his tusks and this time making two horrible wounds which squirted blood. This bowled the youngster over on to his side, but he was up as quickly as a cat. His eyes blazing, his mouth agape.

Then they charged heads high, tusks aloft, nostrils making a hissing noise, mouths wide open and roaring.

Smash. They came together like two small tank cars. Drew back. Charged again. Slashed and fenced with their tusks. Panting, staring. I thought that their skulls must be splintered or smashed, they made so much noise as they pounded them against each other, shattering the silence of the little cove and causing all the herd to awake from their dozing.

The raven watched them. Made caustic and

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

sarcastic remarks. Urging them on to fresh efforts.

The cows had watched for a few moments, but then went to sleep again. They had grown tired of the continual pushing, shoving, charging and roaring.

What did it matter to them? They would mate with the winner and have their calves in due course just the same.

That was the all-important thing to them. Once they were with calves, they would never give the slightest thought as to who put them there.

For half an hour the fight went on.

Tusks against tusks. Old age and experience against youthful vigour and vitality.

Then the youngster broke one of his tusks. His shoulder and sides were gouged, rutted and torn with terrible wounds. One side of his neck seemed to be almost torn away. 'Old Bill's' great tusks had played terrible havoc. By now the rage of the youngster seemed to have evaporated and died away. To give way to uneasiness, then apparently to fear. He was at last gasping. Then the old veteran of a hundred such fights, charged him again, this time rolling him over on to his back, and now plunged his massive tusks again and again into the soft belly and throat until the youngster moved no more.

Age and experience had won.

'Old Bill' raised himself up to his full extent on his front flippers, roared and bellowed with all his might and proclaimed to the world that he was still

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

master of his harem and the undisputed over-lord of that particular herd and if anyone disputed the fact, now was the time to do so or forever after hold his peace.

With croaks of derision the raven flies away and 'Old Bill' makes towards his ladies. Peace reigned in the cove.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

EFFECT OF ARCTIC LIFE ON CIVILIZED NERVES—FLOOR
WHALING—SUMMER IN THE ARCTIC—THE ICE GOES—
INTERNATIONAL INTERESTS IN SIBERIA

MY partner and I made a trip into the interior to prospect in the hills at the back—about thirty miles from the shore. My partner was an expert geologist and mining engineer, but quite a cheechaco as regards the North. As we decided that we should only be away for two or three days at the most, we took two small packs on our backs as the tundra was getting bare in many places and the going would have been too bad for dogs to have drawn a sled. Close to the hills where the snow was still unthawed and several feet deep it would have been practicable.

I have previously alluded to my bad temper and I know now the North brings out the frailty of a man, so kept mine under control. My partner—luckily—was a man who in civilized life one would have said of, “that chap has no temper.” In fact he was the kindest, most easy going man one could wish to meet. But he did not realize that all other trails of brotherhood fail before the terrific strain

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

of Arctic life and privations. He was an expert in his own line, but totally unused to the Arctic trails.

On the Arctic trail, beyond any doubt, after a while, unless a man watches carefully, something goes wrong with the nerves. I think that the huge calls made on muscular endurance has something to do with it.

We keep going for many hours at a stretch; we are often ill-fed, suffer from exposure, the awful cold in winter and the torturing mosquitos and black flies in summer, a somewhat haunting uncertainty as to when the Arctic Gods will get us and what new terror will be sprung on us.

Now the mosquitos were bad, the snow soft and mushy, blindingly white and dazzling against the drab tundra—where it had not thawed, and the muskegs played havoc with our feet and ankles. Soon our feet were sore and then my partner got a bad attack of snowblindness. Suddenly he shouted to me in a burst of rage: "I can't and won't go another step."

It was about ten o'clock at night—of course broad daylight—and I wanted him to keep on going so that we could make camp at a small bunch of timber in the distance. This was about five miles away from where we were at the time.

Sullenly he agreed and we pushed on for another mile, I shouldered the two packs. Suddenly he sank down in some deep snow. I was dogged tired, but used to the life, he was not, poor fellow.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

I made a fire with some dwarf willows and brewed some tea, this and some walrus meat revived him. Then I bathed and washed his eyes with some tea. Next I made him change his mukluks and put on dry ones, with dry grass in the bottoms of them. He seemed to lose heart quite suddenly, sitting there with his eyes bandaged and with drooping shoulders.

I made the best kind of camp I could under the circumstances, letting him sit still while I got a meal ready. I could not get a word out of him. There was not the least doubt in my mind that he was suffering agonies.

Now, snow blindness is not dangerous if treated in the right way and in time, but it is horribly, excruciatingly painful. Your eyes swell to double their normal size and are stabbed constantly by pains as though red hot needles were being pressed into them; your head is full of the most acute neuralgia, and often you have a high fever.

We started back early the next morning; I in the lead and my partner stumbling behind me on a 'safety line' like a man walking in his sleep.

I was carrying the two packs made into one, and at times was forced to pull my partner on the line as he dragged behind; at other times he would keep up with me, almost at my heels, and then the line would be slack and I would not know that he was there.

Sometimes an hour would elapse without him

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

saying a word. Late in the morning something caused me to look behind me and then I found that I was alone. Dropping my pack I started back over our trail at a dog-trot, running, stumbling and calling at intervals, my voice falling into a mechanical monotony of sound.

What was that?

A large muskeg? A shadow on the snow. Was it a man?

Running as fast as I could towards it, I found that it was my partner. Dropping down beside him, I was not far from crying. He was laying in a deep drift, fast asleep. He was deadly cold and frozen badly in places. It was pretty ghastly.

I felt faint and dying.

I began to beat him with my hands. Then as that seemed to do no good, with my fists. I rained blows on his chest, shoulders, and back. Slapped his face. Hit him in the jaw, kicked him. At last he struggled to his feet. Then followed a day of horrors. Toil and mosquitos. I can never recall much about those hours. At times I carried my partner, at times I dragged him. But he was worth it for he was what the North calls, "white clean through."

When we got to the igloos we were both in bad shape. It was two weeks before either of us were fit to move out of the igloo. By then the ice was rotten and great leads ran in all directions. Whilst we had been in the igloos recovering and resting, the village had had a great piece of luck, for they had been out

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

on the ice after whales and had killed a medium sized one.

There is no doubt that floor-whaling, as it is called in the North, is one of the most dangerous means of hunting that there is in the Arctic.

It is thrilling, there is not the least doubt about that, and big game hunters who are tired of the tameness of safari in Africa might do worse than try it for a change. Certainly they will risk their skins against the mightiest mammal left in the world to-day.

Floor-whaling only takes place when the ice is rotten, honeycombed and cracking open into leads in all directions. Then these leads will run for from a mile to a hundred in length and from a few yards to fifty or sixty or more in width. Swimming along these channels or leads come the great whales, usually bowheads, with their huge mouths wide open. They are feeding in this way on the trillions of sea-lice which swarm in such numbers that they turn the sea into a mush. These sea-lice are really nothing but extremely small shrimps and the whales cruise with their mouths open until they fill them.

When the natives from our igloos had gone on this hunt they had been accompanied by several natives from other villages farther away. This is always the custom in floor-whaling which is always done on the lay system. Each man will provide certain items of equipment and they all share and share alike. Killing a whale usually meaning pro-

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

viding ample food for several igloos for the coming winter. It also usually meant the loss of several lives. It really is to the Eskimo in the Far North and in Arctic Siberia, what placer mining means to the poor miner, a chance to make a killing by risking his life, and that is thought little of in the North.

The party will proceed as far as fifty miles out on the rotten field-ice, taking two or three teams with them and on one of these they will drag an oomiak. Then they will make a headquarters camp. Their equipment is simplicity itself. The harpooner, the most skilful man in the party and the one who runs the greatest danger, will be armed with a harpoon which is six feet in length and which has a large lance-head made of ivory—or steel if they are lucky—which is detachable and to which a long line of thick but pliable hide is attached. Tied to this line are four, six or eight floats such as he used for the walrus hunt.

The first two of these will be about one hundred feet from the harpoon head, and the others in pairs every fifty feet. The harpooner endeavours to plunge in his harpoon as near the heart of the great mammal as is possible. Then his wound and the great drag of the several floats will keep him from sounding to too great a depth and he will soon return to the surface.

Immediately the camp has been made—and this is the poorest kind of makeshift shelter—patrols are sent up and down the leads to watch out for the

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

sight of a whale. These men will cover beats of several miles but each beat will end where another starts. These sentries are kept at their posts night and day. Their rest will consist of an hour or so of fitful slumber leaning against a hummock of ice or if lucky in a small snow drift.

Should by any chance the drift close through currents or wind, then another camp must be made. Food consists of great meals of blubber and meat boiled over blubber fires.

Suddenly a sentry will come running in. He reports that a whale has been sighted. All will now be bustle and excitement. Fatigue and cold are forgotten. The oomiak, if not in the water of the lead, is dragged to it, launched and manned by the crew with the harpooner in the bows. Silently it will be paddled to where the mighty brute sounded and then a keen watch is set. He comes up again, the oomiak is paddled noiselessly towards him, the harpooner plunges his weapon into it. With a shudder of its mighty frame it raises its head and then dives, giving the water a smashing blow with its tail as it does so. Then all the skill of the boat's crew is needed to keep it from being swamped, for the oomiak is an open boat and not covered in like a ky-ak.

The whale will now sound for several minutes, but at last the drag of the floats make him come to the surface again and he will shoot up like a trout at a spring fly. Now comes the dangerous part of the work.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

The oomiak will be run alongside to give the harpooner another chance to send a harpoon into it and also to allow the lancers to wound him with their eight foot lances. Then the hunter—white or otherwise—will get the thrill of his life. Almost within hand's reach of the great animal, the harpooner and lancemen wound the whale again and again. Though all know that one touch from his enormous flippers or tail will not only smash their skin boat but kill every man in it.

He will sound again, this time with blood flowing from a dozen wounds. Weaker each time, he soon comes to the surface again to be once more attacked by lance and harpoon. He gets weaker, begins to roll from side to side. Gives a peculiar kind of wriggling, shivers from head to foot and then is still for ever. Dead. A happy winter for several families.

But there is the reverse, and this is more frequent than the one which I have pictured. Far more frequent and far more tragic.

I have known several instances of parties going out on the field-ice, of storms coming up which have driven them far north into the Arctic Ocean and not a man ever being heard of again.

Then there have been cases of parties of from thirty to forty going out for a floor-whale hunt and being caught in a howling blizzard. The ice smashing and pounding to pieces under their feet and of only one or two survivors ever reaching land.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

I talked to one old hunter who had once been the sole survivor of the hunting party in his oomiak. The following is roughly the description he gave to me of what occurred. The sentry had given warning of the whale in the lead on which the oomiak was floating, the whale had sounded and the oomiak had gone to the spot at which they expected that he would reappear.

“I was standing ready with my harpoon. We were all looking over the side of the oomiak down in the water. Then I saw him slowly rising, coming up to the surface like some great devil. As he came nearer the oomiak he increased his pace. With a great roar he shot right out of the water not many feet from the oomiak. He hit the water again with a great smash and his tail hit the oomiak. Many of the hunters must have been killed by the blow. I was thrown into the water close to a small piece of ice and soon some other hunters rescued me. I was the only man who was alive.”

How he ever survived is a miracle, for once a man is in that icy water he seldom lasts for many minutes. His hands freeze, then his arms. His legs are soon solid ice. His heavy furs weight him down as the ice forms on them and even if there is anyone near to throw him a line he is unable to grasp it. The great consolation is that it is almost always only a matter of from two to three minutes from the time a man is in the water until he sinks frozen to a solid mass.

Yet it is marvellous what these natives can go

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

through and yet survive. I knew of an instance of two natives—children—who owing to bad weather were marooned on some broken ice. They were driven ashore three days after at a point many miles away from their igloo. This was on a shore where the cliffs towered above the seashore for miles and miles. These two youngsters, starving as they were, clambered over rocks and ice for another three days before reaching their igloos and after a good meal or two seemed to be as well as ever.

One of the—at least to me—marvellous things about the Arctic is the fact that the tundra not only produces a moss which feeds the reindeer and caribou but a moss which is edible and which will support man for at least a time. Really the tundra is marvellous in many ways, for even its foreboding appearance is decked with patches of colour for a week or two in the heat of the Arctic summer.

It had been thawing during the day and freezing during the night for some weeks. The midday sun being now intensely hot. This had been going on for so long that we had lost count of the time and forgotten winter. At last the weather variations had been so great that the whole population of the village had been stopped from making any journeys except by ky-ak or oomiak. It was the slack time between the two seasons. Now the slush was waist deep everywhere, in the creeks, kloofs and on the tundra round the igloos. The little community of igloos by the mouth of the river seemed to sit

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

unsecurely on the boggy but high bank overlooking the river. We waded knee deep in soaking tundra-moss and mire whenever we plucked up courage to move even a few yards.

Up on the hills at the back of the village, the drift snow was now dirty and honeycombed. Whole fields gave way and came rushing down to the tundra plain with thunderous roars. The devilish 'skeeters became a nuisance, then a pest, a plague, then the torments of hell. Now the Arctic winter silence was suddenly broken by a thousand different noises. Tinkling, murmuring, twinkling water. All the brooks on the hills chuckled and sang, laughing at their release as they made their way to the shores of the Arctic Ocean. If I bent my head to the river ice, I could plainly hear the mighty movements underneath of the pent-up and swollen waters fighting to burst through.

The days hung heavily on our hands now. There was nothing to do. We had gone over our gear again and again. Little more could be done by anyone until the ice went out. The centre ice in the river humped its back; yet with all the terrific pressure exerted by the flood waters below it did not crack, several feet deep as it was, that northern ice was getting more feeble each day.

More and more sound came from the river.

Geese and ducks appeared in great wedge-shaped flocks that darkened the sky and their honking and quacking in the sluits and creeks made a deafening noise. Every tiny lake or body of water was thick

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

with them. When killed, however, they were so tough after their flight of several thousand miles that they were not fit to eat.

The sun now poured down from overhead for twenty-four hours, night and day were one and the same. We slept and ate when the fit seized us. Every man, woman and child watched the river ice.

When would it go out? was the thought and topic of conversation of all.

For untold ages it had meant to them: watch out for the fury of the shattered, moving, roaring river ice; beware of the great flood when it is loosed. Take careful heed that no lives are lost *this year*, as in every year before. Get ready all the ky-aks and oomiaks. See that all the hunting weapons are well lashed, strong and in good order, for plenty or famine next winter will depend on the hunting of the coming weeks.

Soon salmon would be forcing their way up the ice-jam.

No one could settle to anything for long.

Then the cry went up from every squaw, man and child. None so old, none so young that they could not cry aloud: "The ice goes. The ice goes. Come. Come. The ice is going out from the river."

They darted from igloo tunnels, yelling madly with excitement, screaming, laughing with delight. It was the great event of the year. To them it was as is New Years Eve with us in Great Britain.

Every dog woke and gave tongue.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

All in the village could now hear the rubbing grinding noise that came from the river, deep and angry.

As we stood on the river bank, the solid mass seemed to quiver, shudder, to move. A compact sheet of ice, as wide as the Thames at London Bridge and three miles or more in length, with a grinding, roaring crash, went past the igloos at ten miles an hour, then jammed at the river mouth where there was a bar which did not allow more than three feet of water over it normally. In an astonishingly short space of time, seconds it seemed to me, there was a barrier of ice at the bar forty feet high.

As I watched in breathless suspense the ice mass trembled. Then I heard thunder. No, it was the ice once more, crushing, grinding, with the weight and force of millions of tons of water behind it.

Sections of river ice, hundreds of yards in length were lifted and thrown against the barrier at the bar. Huge pieces as large as a London Square were shot out of the water against the banks. Great pieces as large as the igloos were flung out of the water and up into the air.

Every few minutes a mighty unbroken sheet would rend in the centre of the river and the black, angry waters shoot through. Then all became silent and still again. This was until the water had risen another twenty feet and was now pressing against the barrier with unbelievable force.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

It was marvellous, awe-inspiring to stand and watch the terrific forces which were unloosed. The long tension, the mysterious sounds, the sense of some great, unbridled power at work, wrought on my imagination. Late that night the piled up masses trembled. Then I heard a crashing, grinding as of mountains of glass hurled from a great height on to a mile square pavement, and saw the barrier give way, and the mighty ice mass, with millions of tons of water behind it, swept out to sea, carrying with it the rotten, honeycombed, anchored sea-ice.

Summer had come.

Birds were singing. The community was happy. Bellies would be full—at least for a time. Only two lives had been lost. One a child, the other a useless old hag who had ended her life by throwing herself into the raging river.

The Arctic moss and succulent lichens showed everywhere, green, yellow and grey. Back in the hills there would soon be berries to gather. Eggs could be collected in hundreds—good and bad, but eaten with zest. Ptarmigan would be plentiful and life would be easy until the next winter freeze-up, ten short weeks away at the most.

Here I will take my leave of Siberia, for my journey back the following winter was only a repetition of what I have already described.

I visited Wrangel Island and even made a trip by oomiak as far as Cape Billingsa. Everywhere I saw evidence of the great wealth of this wonderful country, *but there will never be the gold rushes in those*

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

parts which took place in Alaska. The reason of this is that the U.S.S.R. does not allow personal exploitation. The gold is there—alluvial—as rich as in any fields ever found in Alaska or any other part of the world, but, no poor miner can exploit a field unless he can get supplies into the country and can replenish them from trading stores run by individuals or by large companies.

This cannot be done in the part of Siberia I have been writing about, and as far as I know, cannot be done in other parts of the country. To be moderately successful at alluvial diggings, the miner must have whip-saws with which to cut the timber for his sluice boxes—if he is in timber country—and if not, then he must be able to bring timber into the country. Neither of these things are possible in Arctic Siberia except on the fields being worked by the Government.

On Wrangel Island we did not find any trace of gold either in quartz formation or in alluvial. We landed at a bay now known as Selfridge Bay, working along from Cape Blossom the most westerly cape to Cape Hanaii in the far east. It is a grim, foreboding land but I understand that since we were there the Russians have built a large wireless station and aerodrome on the island.

Most unfortunately for Siberia when she belonged to the Old Russian Empire of the Tsars, she was merely the dumping ground for political exiles and criminals. Through this, as in Australia for nearly fifty years, Siberia came to be looked upon as only

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

a vast wilderness and a happy hunting ground for traders and escaped convicts and exiles. From this Siberia got a reputation throughout the world as being a land fit for no one to settle in and where there was nothing but snow, tundra and ice.

The last few years, however, have shown this to be an error of the greatest magnitude—and there is no nation in the whole world that knows this better than Japan. Before the war, Siberia never had the benefit nor the advantage of technical brains and skill to investigate its stupendous natural resources: neither had it anyone enough interested to push the country. Its governors of those days all thought of making—or stealing enough—to enable them to return to the delights of St. Petersburg and the Court circles. Siberia, however, can and does produce more and better wheat, larger quantities of alfalfa and more timber than the United States or Canada, but against this, she has only one railroad and few highroads to serve a vast continent which is more than three times the size of the United States.

In a short time from to-day, with the doubling of the Trans Siberian line and the advent of other projected lines, motor-roads which are being built, the tremendous importation of farming machinery added to what Russia is manufacturing herself and people who are fast being educated, Siberia will become a storehouse of the world.

Migration must come, then industry will develop

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

it as it did the States and Canada and in a decade or two make of it one of the richest countries in the world. It is hard to make people realize her future as it is to make them realize her vast size. One thing no man who has been there will deny. In Siberia in the next fifty years, fortunes will be made as great and greater than any ever made in South Africa or the United States.

Japan knows this. Knows it from careful investigation through her spy system. The exhaustive cultivation of the soil of China for the last two thousand years has made the greater part of it almost non-productive. Then again China has millions of her own population in almost every province, these are crowded together almost as closely as is the population of Japan—except in the Province of Manchuria.

Siberia is virgin. Japan not only holds fast to the southern part of the island Sakhalien, but is trying to push her way into the rich Province of the Amur. There is a hundred times more for the Japanese in Siberia than in all China, Cochin China, and Siam.

It is almost the last untouched treasure ground in the world: treasure of timber, gold, wheat, copper, tobacco, manganese, cotton, coal, fish, furs and water-power.

Few people from the United Kingdom go there, but those young people who will take the chance of doing this in the next few years, will eventually make as great fortunes and futures for themselves as those

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

who went to South Africa and the United States, the Argentine, Chili and Canada fifty years ago, *for conditions will not always be as they are to-day in Siberia.*

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE MOTHER LODGE—FAREWELL

AND now one final tale of an Alaskan experience before I end this book of some of my experiences in the North—for I was up there three times in all.

The hunt for the 'Mother Lode' (of gold) has always been a lure to the miners of Alaska from the earliest days of the purchase of the territory from Russia by Secretary of the Interior Seward—and known by Americans for years as Seward's Folly. This lure for the 'Mother Lode' has also been a lure of unvarying bad luck for most who have followed this 'will-o'-the-wisp'. Disasters have more often than not overtaken all those who have sought for it.

Here is the tale of the time when I tried my luck with Billy Caldwell and Steve Benson. The 'Old Timers' of Rampart City shook their wise heads when I spoke about it and foretold that if we three were crazy enough to go seeking it, we would never return.

The 'Mother Lode', they one and all swore was just a myth, one of the several yarns handed down from the earliest days of mining on the Yukon River and its tributaries; from the times of Henderson, Old Man White, Ladue and Crane. One half-

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

breed had once told MacQueston that he knew where it was located. He had never explained if that was the case, why he had never staked on it.

The story went that it was somewhere way up on the southern slope of the Endicott mountains on the left hand fork of the Koyukuk River, in a great chasm known as the Devil's Smoking cañon.

It was said that this cañon was a long and narrow one, extending due east and west and that its walls were straight cliffs more than a thousand feet high. Then the tale went on to give the landmarks nearby. This was said to be a circle of ten ice-capped peaks which were situated at its western extremity. Also it was told that the cañon lay just above the timber-line, that the ore body occupied the whole of its narrow bed and that there was enough gold there in sight to pay off the whole cost of the Great War.

With this seemingly accurate description, many parties and single prospectors had tried to find it but all had failed to locate a trace of it. Most of those who had set out had never been heard of again. The Koyukuk country is one of the worst in all Alaska and no part of Arctic Siberia is colder. It is nothing unusual there for the glass to go to eighty degrees below zero and stay there for days at a time. Many had died of starvation, others of the terrible cold, others again by wind-felled timber, glacial precipices, rapids or wolves.

The only man who had ever gone after it and returned to tell the tale was Innuvit Joe, a half-breed who had been the guide for a party of four whites.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

And just at that time Innuít Joe was one of Rampart City's rich claim owners. He had a fine bench claim on Minook Creek.

I had met Joe once on the trail and so before I left went to his cabin to find out what—if anything—he knew. It turned out that he had left Rampart City a few weeks previously for some destination unknown, but I learnt from his squaw that whenever he went on one of the mysterious trips, Joe always returned with *hi-yu* (plenty) of gold. So we three started off with only general information—as all others had done.

We reached Beetles store on the Koyukuk River in good shape and here bought fresh supplies. Then one day Caldwell who was breaking trail ahead of the dogs, stopped and calling to me pointed ahead.

Ahead I saw two men, one laying down on the river-ice. Caldwell started ahead again and I yelled to the team, urging them at their fastest pace. Down the river we went making splendid time on the almost glare ice which was as smooth as the floor of a good ballroom.

The sounds of our coming, the thuds of moc-casined feet, and the shrill whine of the steel sled runners on the ice carried to the two men. One, hunched over the prostrate body of his companion, staggered to his feet.

"What's wrong?" shouted Caldwell.

The man who stood up was obviously an Indian half-breed. He swayed on his feet as he answered:

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

“Um die. Um get no grub. We starved. Come from Endicott mountains.”

We looked at the white man who lay on the river-ice. His whole body was solidly frozen, and he lay on his back with his emaciated, stiffened, mask-like face upturned. His eyes were badly inflamed, and full of frozen matter, his face was seared and twisted from being frozen again and again.

It was the worst case of frost bites and snow-blindness that any of we three had ever seen in all our travelling in Arctic Alaska.

The Indian breed went on: “We um up in glaciers. Bad. Way up high. Um snow glare and um frost bit white man bad. Me sabee um. Me hi-yu skookum (very strong) Indian. Can stand um. Him white man, no can stand um. Me Innuít Joe, heep musher, heep hunter, heep guide. We um go hunt for ‘Mother Lode’.”

Yet all the time Innuít Joe was speaking I was watching the piggy eyes of the breed. I did not trust him worth a cent. He then volunteered to go with us back to his last camp if we would supply him with grub. After going up the Koyukuk River for some distance he said:

“See um big tree there. There we make a cache.”

That night we told Innuít Joe that like it or lump it, he came along with us and finally he sullenly agreed.

Supper was quickly eaten that night, the dogs fed, wind brakes erected and a good fire got going in the forest on the river banks. Then we sat and smoked. After a while we tried to pump Joe about the ‘Lode’.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

We got nothing out of him try as we would. He sat there humped Indian fashion, with his pipe in his mouth and grunting occasionally, but no one could tell what he meant by these.

Silent as a sphinx as to giving any information which would help us in any way. Then he rolled in. This we arranged so that he slept surrounded by the three of us, with one of us always awake, we knew that this would prevent him bolting—we little knew that Indian. We thought that we were smart. Yet he got away during the night in spite of all our precautions, but luckily empty handed.

Steve Benson admitted that he "had nodded for p'raps a second, not more."

At breakfast I noticed that Steve had not only got a bad touch of snowblindness but that his cheeks were black from old frostbites. Then Caldwell complained of his eyes. This looked bad to me. I bathed both of them with tea and made a mess of soot and bacon fat and plastered their cheeks with this.

We ate breakfast in silence. Then harnessing the team to the sled, we swung down the river bank on to the ice and once more started up the Koyukuk River. Then we ran on the tracks of Innuits Joe ahead of us. Twice we came across where he had made kills. Once it was a small deer, the other time it was rabbits.

Three days went by. We passed up the left branch of the Koyukuk River which leads to the western end of the Endicott mountains. Then we

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

swung west again up a small tributary which descended between a spur of the Endicott range. The headwaters of this creek landed us at a point near the crossing of the Arctic circle. At this stage we decided to leave the sled on account of the precipitous travel ahead, back-pack the dogs with fifty pound loads, taking one hundred and fifty pound loads in packs on our own backs and cut into the Endicott mountains after the cañon and the 'Mother Lode'. We had no real plan to go by, and could not have followed a plan had we possessed one. All about us was a bewildering chaos of cañons, divides, spurs and cross ranges, all cut by deep valleys. We wandered back and forth through glaciers, storms and terrific frosts.

It was all a jig-saw puzzle of nature's making. A travesty of mountain formation, a cosmic, geological muddle where the Titan Carver of the icy peaks had hewn haphazard with his mighty axe; splitting the great barrier of rocks into the most grotesque shapes and littering the whole region with gigantic rubble of rocks.

There was no reasonable topographical formation or trend which might result in reefs or ledges. Blind cañons ran in all directions but not one of them was the cañon we sought. Some were just about the timber-line, yet either the timber or the formation did not suit.

Still, whichever cañon we struck, we surface-prospected it on chance. The search ran into weeks, and the day came when we reluctantly gave up.

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

"We cross that short range first," said Steve. "Those peaks have been smoking for days, but though it's plaguey risky we can risk it."

"Go ahead," I said. "We'll cache the rifles, grub and all the outfit out of harms way."

We went up past ancient glacier faces and age-old moraines that had been there since the beginning of time. Up and up we went, high above the timberline and questing north along the face of a cross range. Peering down in cañons for one looking like 'Mother Lode' cañon.

Half-way across a puff of wind caught us, no normal mountain breeze, but a glacial breath rushing like a solid wall and caused by some enormous glacial avalanche in the distance. We fought for our balance as the rushing wind dislodged snow which poured on us from above, overwhelming us in a white, foaming maelstrom. We whizzed from our ledge with a sinking drop into a drift below, literally swimming our way to the surface, breathing spasmodically and getting the snow out of our ears, eyes, mouth and nostrils.

Caldwell was the first to spot it.

"Hectic hell!" he yelled. "Look at this cañon, will yer?"

The rocky walls sheered up straight and unscalable for quite a thousand feet, but the head of the cañon was a blind. Above the solid wall I glimpsed ten encircling, ice-clad peaks.

Steve dashed recklessly along the rim of the pocket and slid to the bottom of the cañon. Farther up

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

there was no snow. The bed of the cañon lay bare but with an unearthly smoke oozing from cracks in the floor. All around lay charred timber. Bill dropped to his knees and with his prospecting hammer chipped off a piece of rotten quartz. "Rich, but tain't the 'Mother Lode'," he said.

It certainly was rich, must have been more than five hundred dollars to the ton. I was all for staking at once. They wanted to do more prospecting. I was estimating in millions. Soon we came across two old location stakes but the names and dates on them had been obliterated by the weather.

Steve was the first to notice that things were far from right.

"We're in a rotten trap here, pardners," he said. "Let's get through the pass. We can come back again. We'll camp at our cache."

We climbed a steep rim and then below us lay the cañon, twisting and turning like a dozen S-shapes before opening into the pass. Then without warning we ran into a ten by twelve feet A tent, in a dense thicket of dwarf furs.

Pulling open the flap, Steve entered. I poked my head in and nearly got knocked over as Steve backed hurriedly.

There were five dead men in there. Four were whites and one was an Indian. All dead from starvation and cold. We sheered off. There was something uncanny about the whole locality. We decided to make back next day for Rampart City. Outfit properly, organize a party of a dozen tried

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

men and then return. There was enough in that cañon for ten times that number. But supplies could only be got in there during the winter; that is until we had made enough to operate on a large scale. Make our headquarters at the place where the Koyukuk ran up to the base of the mountains, get supplies that far by canoes and then by pack team into the mountains. Later perhaps build a light railway as was done at Nome.

I had it all mapped out roughly in my mind. Either Wall Street or the London Stock Exchange should float the company.

The rapid pace we were hitting prohibited further Rhodes-like plans by me—and from buying up the Bank of England. The dogs were at our heels as we topped a moraine.

The instant our heads were above the giant stones we beheld torrents of smoke rolling like a thunder cloud from the cañon's rim.

With a terrific effort we made a sprint up another notch to where the summit of the pass began to widen. A huge blast and puff of smoke hit us.

We looked into a burning cañon into which no man would ever set foot again. As at the beginning of time, the mountain cañon was consuming in the kilns of chaos. The abysmal fires many feet deep, had burst through and even as we stood there parts of the cliffs were falling in.

The head of the cañon, extending under the base of the palisades was crumbling. The undermined palisades themselves were crushing from the clouds

TRAILING THROUGH SIBERIA

and the precious ore-veins of free-milling gold were seeping back to the heart of the earth from whence they had sprung ages ago. That vein of the metal all the world values so highly, was lost for ever.

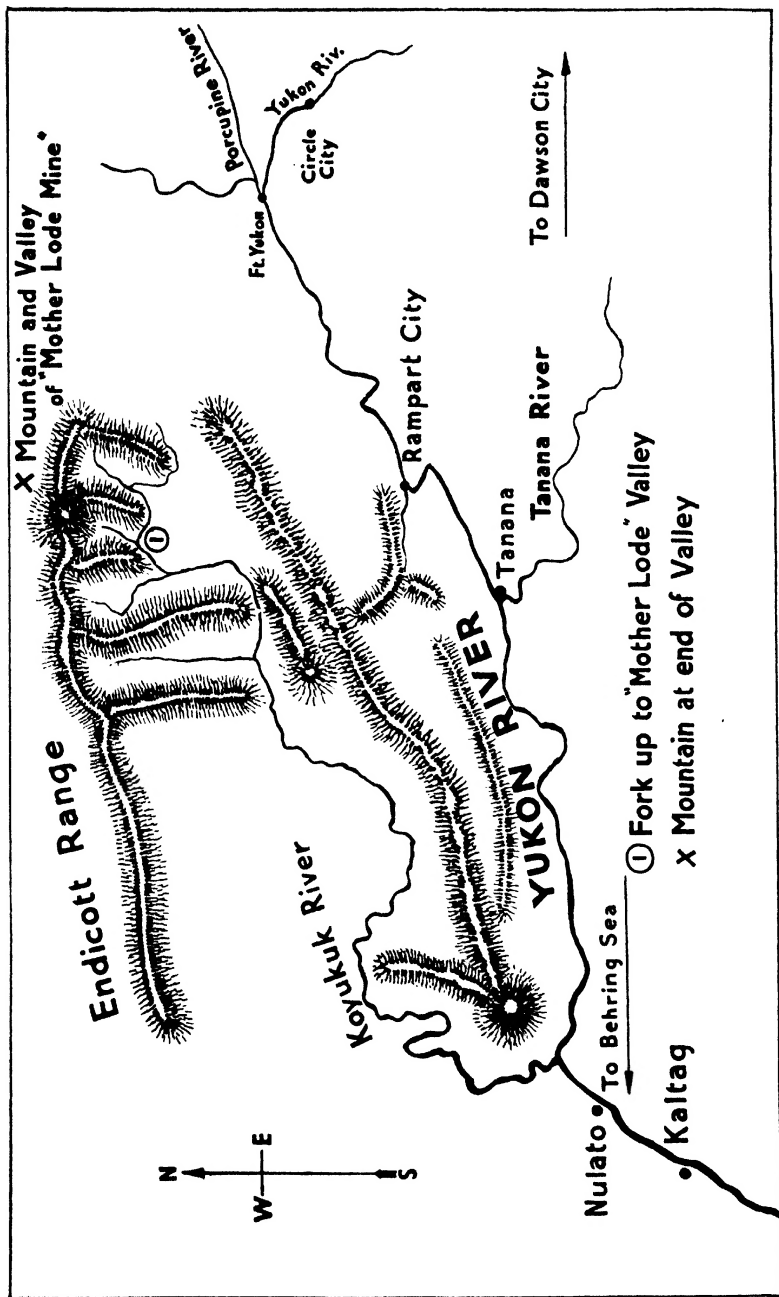
Maybe not the 'Mother Lode' but it was certainly fabulously rich.

Back in Rampart City, sitting in Crane's Store, I told this tale. Those 'old timers' sat in silence, when I had finished, one said:

"You sure deserve a drink after that. Oh, Boy! You've got 'em all licked."

And still the talk of finding the 'Mother Lode' is heard in all the camps in Alaska.

THE END



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